CRUMBS OF COMFORT

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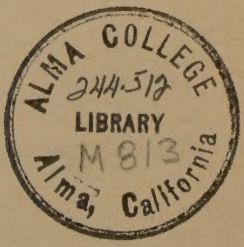
FROM THE DIALOGUE OF COMFORT UNDER TRIBULATION BY BLESSED THOMAS MORE

By
HENRY SEBASTIAN BOWDEN
Of the Oratory.

"The whelps also eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table."—*Matt. xv, 27.*



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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
Preface		vii
I	Pagan Philosophy Comfortless	1
II	No Comfort without Faith	4
III	Comfortless Folk	7
IV	Seeking Comfort of God	9
V	Comfort to be sought as God wills	12
VI	Tribulation draweth to God	19
VII	Penal Tribulation yet remedial	22
VIII	Tribulation, apparently undeserved, remedial	27
IX	Tribulation sent only for the Exercise of Patience	30
X	Penal Tribulation also meritorious	34
XI	Protestant Objections answered	37
XII	Danger of Continual Prosperity	40
XIII	Flatterers	46
XIV	Weal or Wo. Which best?	50
XV	The Web of Life	54
XVI	Divers effects of Tribulation	58
XVII	The Value of Prayer in Pain	62
XVIII	The Profits of Tribulation	67
XIX	Recreation and Comfort	71
XX	The Snuff of a Candle	75

CHAP.		PAGE
XXI	Sad and Glad	77
XXII	How to get Contrition	80
XXIII	" Qui Habitat," (Ps. xc.)	85
XXIV	The Night's Fear	89
XXV	Pusillanimity	95
XXVI	Suicide	99
XXVII	How to fight suicidal Temptation	102
XXVIII	" The Arrow flying by Day " (Ps. xc.)	107
XXIX	" Business walking about in the Darkness," (Ps. xc.)	113
XXX	Dangers and Duties of the Rich	119
XXXI	Zaccheus	123
XXXII	Anticipating Trials	128
XXXIII	" Dæmonium Meridianum," The Mid-day Devil, (Ps. xc.)	132
XXXIV	The Loss of Outward Goods	136
XXXV	Authority desired for itself	140
XXXVI	No Compromise	145
XXXVII	Comfort in Captivity	150
XXXVIII	Comfort in Prison	155
XXXIX	Comfort in Death	161
XL	Shame in Martyrdom	166
XLI	Pain in Martyrdom	171
XLII	The Pain of Hell	176
XLIII	The Joys of Heaven	179
XLIV	The Passion of Christ	184

PREFACE

TROILO SAVELLI, a young Italian nobleman, sentenced to death for murder and brigandage in the sixteenth century, on the eve of his execution was visited by members of the "Confortatori," who assisted him through the night with their prayers and counsel, and so relieved his solitude and strengthened him for the end. B. Thomas More, during his fifteen months' confinement in the Tower, had no such assistance offered him. His only visitors, his wife and his loved daughter, Margaret, urged him strongly to take the oath which had already been accepted by all the English Bishops except B. Fisher. But his conscience forbade it. The whole tradition of Christendom was on his side, and no company, however illustrious, would excuse him at the Judgement Seat if he acted against his faith and his convictions. How these convictions were formed he tells us in the *Dialogue of Comfort under Tribulation*, composed during his imprisonment. In its pages he lays bare his soul and discloses the source of his strength. He brushes

aside the stoic fatalism or the objective unreality of pain taught by the Christian Scientists of the day as opposed to reason and experience, and incapable of offering any real comfort. By comfort he meant, not the present bodily pleasure experienced " after a cup of good wine," but the consolation of hope of some good coming, and the comfort to be sought is not necessarily in the removal of the trial but in submission to God's Will. This hope of good to come is founded on Faith in God and His Word. To More " the sayings of our Saviour were not a poet's fable or a harper's song, but the very Holy Word of Almighty God Himself." Faith is His gift, and must be sought and intensified by prayer. By this means, the world excluded, in solitude and apart, our faith may become strong enough to remove mountains. This was his experience. In his little narrow cell the world and its phantasies and this life were as a passing pageant—God and Eternity the one reality. This is the ground of his argument throughout, the comparison of things temporal and eternal, of present suffering and future gain. Thus viewed, tribulation is more to be esteemed than prosperity. Prosperity in itself is only of temporal value, and may be the source of much danger ; while adversity, borne for God, satisfies for past

sins, is a shield against temptations, and is always meritorious. It gives a sacrificial value to prayer—" an inch of prayer under pain is worth an ell at other times." He considers those three prayers of our Lord, though all of infinite value, offered in His Passion as most meritorious. The thraldom of captivity is indeed painful, but the suffering is more imaginary than real. For as a fact all the world is a prison. What is a prison but a place where criminals are confined till they are led out to die ? We enter the world under the sentence of death because of original sin, we live in it whether it be in a castle or a palace or a narrow cell, but for all alike the sentence is carried out at the hour God wills. This then is " no sophistical phantasy," he says, " but a substantial truth which has filled my mind for years." His thoughts on the " Qui habitat " (Ps. xc) show his deep scriptural insight, and what should be man's trust in the impenetrable pavice of God's protection, and how valueless are the false " conjurations " of proud or deluded souls which easily lead to despair. The attraction to mediums of various kinds seems to have been as strong then as now.

Sorrow for sin is a bounden duty. If a man cannot feel contrition he must grieve that he is not sorry, and purge the spirit

by affliction of the flesh. More himself constantly wore a hair shirt. As for the new teachers who declare works valueless, take no penance at all, but " sit them down cock a hoop, fill all the cups at once, and then let Christ's Passion pay for all shot. I am not he that will envy their good hap, but surely counsel I can give no man to adventure that way with them."

Austere as B. Thomas More is, and convinced that true comfort is to be found in God alone, yet he admitted the need for human weakness of some recreation of honest mirth, so he intersperses his meditations with merry tales, some of which we have given, and they serve to shew the strength of his soul, which in its agony could rejoice, but recreation must be used " as sauce, not as meat." As to suffering, whatever pain God permits to assail us, He will strengthen us to bear or deliver us therefrom. The fear of Hell will cast out the fear of any temporal pain, however violent. And surely God's provision of Hell, which seems most rigorous, is indeed a marvellous mercy, for how many men and women that are in Heaven now would never have taken a step towards it had they not been feared of Hell. He thought then on this point with St. Teresa, who considered the vision of her place in Hell, though its bare remembrance chilled

her still, as one of the greatest mercies of our Lord. The joys of Heaven again should make us strong to endure. What these joys are Scripture says: "The righteous there shall shine as the stars and run about like sparks of fire among the reeds" (Wisdom iii, 7). But "the carnal minded man hath no desire for his flesh to shine like a spark of fire to skip about the sky," nor for his body to be impassible and not to eat, drink and sleep for all his pleasure lies therein." Yet when he is cast low in sickness and pain he will hold these fleshly pleasures in abomination, and would fain give the whole world to have a little of those joys of Heaven. As for the opinion of men, earthly fame is but a blast of wind; those who praise a man to his face laugh at him behind his back, yet men so rejoice in flattery that they think others are crying "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus!" upon them all day and night. What seems more solid and enduring, this world's goods, those who prefer them to the joys of Heaven are as idiot fools who refuse to exchange a bag of cherry stones for a bigger bag of gold. "Contemptus saeculi" is then the conclusion of the teaching, but we have not only to turn from the world but to turn to the remembrance of Christ's Passion which should strengthen us to bear, and draw us to Him.

How often have earthly lovers given their lives for love of her whom they will never see again and without hope of reward? How many Roman patriots have sacrificed themselves for their country with nothing in return but earthly fame? How then should we shrink from suffering as much for a throne of glory in Heaven—as a man in a fray feels not a wound, nor yet indeed is ware thereof, so a mind ravished in the thought of Christ's Death, Hell and Heaven would face a painful death with but little fear. With these thoughts he prepared for his end, and when the summons came he answered it with eagerness for the horror of death had been long discounted, and he was leaving exile and going home.

In this time of war we are living with the horrors of violent death daily brought before us, with the loss of our brightest and best breaking many hearts and leaving a void which nothing earthly can fill. The truths then which armed B. Thomas for his passion, and are as real and fundamental now as then, may bring us that true comfort which comes alone from God and the Faith.

The Dialogue of Comfort was composed by B. Thomas More in 1534 when imprisoned in the Tower. Its purpose was to prepare the minds of Englishmen for the coming persecutions, and to conceal

the author's identity it was presented as composed by a Hungarian, translated into Latin, and from this to French, and again to English. In its original form the Dialogue consists of imaginary conversations between B. Thomas More, under the name of Antony, and his nephew Vincent. The questions proposed by the latter are incorporated and answered in the Saint's theses in the following pages, so that the whole takes the form of the points numbered in each chapter. The extracts given present only a summary much abbreviated of the Dialogue, though it is hoped this has been effected without any important change or omission. This conciseness has been aimed at to obtain a wider circulation under a handier form. Of the Dialogue, Cresacre More, the author's great-grandson says: "There is in this book so witty, pithy and substantial matter, for the easing and patiently suffering of all manner of griefs, that a man cannot desire anything of more efficacy to be added thereto." "More," says Bridgett, "wrote the purest English of his time, and had an exact knowledge of the language."* His style, we may add, forcible and terse, has an eloquence of its own. The quaint terms employed and the antiquated spelling have been left unmodernized.

* Preface, *Life of More.*

Chapter I

PAGAN PHILOSOPHY COMFORTLESS

i

TRIBULATION seemeth generally to signify nothing else but some kind of grief, either pain of the body or heaviness of the mind. Now the body not to feel that it feeleth, all the wit in the world cannot bring about. But that the mind should not be grieved, neither with the pain that the body feeleth nor with occasions of heaviness offered and given unto the soul itself, this thing laboured the philosophers very much about, and many goodly sayings have they toward the strength and comfort against tribulation, exciting men to the full contempt of all worldly loss, and despising of sickness, and all bodily grief, painful death and all. Howbeit in very deed for anything that ever I read in them, I could never yet find that ever those natural reasons were able to give sufficient comfort of themselves. For they never stretch so far, but that they leave untouched, for lack of necessary knowledge, that special point which is

not only the chief comfort of all, but, without which also, all other comforts are nothing: that is, to wit, the referring of the final end of their comfort unto God, and to repute and take for the special cause of comfort, that by the patient sufferance of their tribulation they shall attain His favour, and for their pain receive reward at His hand in heaven. And therefore, for the lack of these things, all their comfortable counsels are very far insufficient. Howbeit, some drugs have they yet in their shops, for which they may be suffered to dwell among our apothecaries, if their medicines be not made of their own brains, but after the bills made by the great physician God.

ii

WE shall, therefore, neither fully receive these philosophers' reasons in this matter, nor yet utterly refuse them; but the principal and the effectual medicines against these diseases of tribulation shall we fetch from that high, great and excellent physician, without whom we could never be healed of our very deadly disease of damnation. For our necessity wherein, the Spirit of God thus saith to us, *Honora medicum; propter necessitatem etenim ordinavit eum Altissimus* *—

* Eccl. xxxviii.

Honour thou the physician, for him hath the high God ordained for thy necessity. Therefore, let us require the high physician our blessed Saviour Christ, whose holy manhood God ordained for our necessity, to cure our deadly wounds with the medicine made of His most wholesome blood: that as against the sickness and sorrows of tribulations may so comfort and strengthen us in His grace as the devil may never by his poisoned dart of murmur, grudge, and impatience, to turn our short sickness of worldly tribulation into the endless everlasting death of infernal damnation.

Chapter II

NO COMFORT WITHOUT FAITH

i

SITH all our comfort must come from God: it presupposes faith without which all the spiritual consolation that man may speak of can never avail a fly. For as it were utterly vain to lay natural reasons of comfort to him that hath no wit, so were it undoubtedly frustrate to lay spiritual causes of comfort to him that hath no faith. For except a man first believe that Holy Scripture is the word of God, and that the word of God is true, how can a man take any comfort of that that the Scriptures telleth him therein? Needs must the man take little fruit of the Scripture, if he either believe not that it were the word of God, or else ween that, though it were, it might yet be for all that untrue. This faith, as it is more faint, or more strong, so shall the comfortable words of Holy Scripture stand the man in more stead, or less.

ii

THIS virtue of faith can neither any man give himself, nor yet any one man another. For, as St. James saith, *Omne datum optimum, et omne donum perfectum desursum est, descendens a patre luminum**—Every good gift and every perfect gift is given from above, descending from the Father of lights. Therefore, feeling our faith by many tokens very faint, let us pray to Him that giveth it, that it may please Him to help and increase it. And let us first say with the man in the Gospel, *Credo Domine, adjuva incredulitatem meam*—I believe, good Lord, but help thou the lack of my belief. And after, let us pray with the Apostles, *Domine, adauge nobis fidem*—Lord increase our faith. And, finally, let us consider by Christ's saying unto them, that if we would not suffer the strength and fervour of our faith to wax lukewarm, or rather key-cold, and in manner lose his vigour by scattering our minds abroad about so many trifling things, that of the matters of our faith we very seldom think, but that we would withdraw our thought from the respect and regard of all worldly fantasies, and so gather our faith together into a little narrow room, and like the little

* Jacob. i.

grain of a mustard seed,* which is of nature hot, set it in the garden of our soul, all weeds pulled out for the better feeding of our faith; then shall it grow, and so spread up in height, that the birds, that is, to wit, the holy angels of heaven, shall breed in our soul and bring forth virtues in the branches of our faith. And then with the faithful trust, that through the true belief of God's word we shall put in His promise, we shall be well able to command a great mountain † of tribulation to void from the place where it stood in our heart; whereas, with a very feeble faith and a faint, we shall be scant able to remove a little hillock. And, therefore, for the first conclusion, as we must of necessity before any spiritual comfort presupposes the foundation of faith; so sith no man can give us faith, but only God, let us never cease to call upon God therefore.

* Matth. xvii. † Mar. xi.

Chapter III

COMFORTLESS FOLK

i

AS the cure of the person is desperate who hath not the will to be cured, so is the discomfort of that person desperate who hath not the will to be comforted. One sort there are that are so drowned in sorrow, that they fall into a careless deadly dulness, regarding nothing, thinking almost of nothing, no more than if they lay in a lethargy, with which it may so fall that wit and remembrance will wear away, and fall even fair from them. And this comfortless kind of heaviness in tribulation is the highest kind of the deadly sin of sloth.

ii

ANOTHER sort are there that will seek for no comfort, nor yet none receive, but are in their tribulation (be it loss or sickness) so testy, so fumish, and so far out of all patience, that it booteth no man to speak to them: and these are in a manner with impatience as furious,

as though they were in half a phrenzy, and may, with a custom of such fashioned behaviour, fall in thereto full and whole. And this kind of heaviness in tribulation is even a mischievous high branch of the mortal sin of Ire.

iii

A THIRD sort are those that in their sorrow seek for worldly comfort; and of them shall we now speak the less, for the divers occasions that we shall after have to touch them in more places than one. But this will I here say, that I learned of St. Bernard: He that in tribulation turneth himself unto worldly vanities, to get help and comfort by them, fareth like a man that in peril of drowning catcheth whatsoever cometh next to hand, and that holdeth he fast, be it never so simple a stick; but then that helpeth him not, for that stick he draweth down under the water with him, and there lie they drowned both together. So surely if we custom ourself to put our trust of comfort in the delight of these peevish worldly things, God shall for that foul fault suffer our tribulation to grow so great that all the pleasures of this world shall never bear us up, but all our peevish pleasure shall in the depth of tribulation drown with us.

Chapter IV

SEEKING COMFORT OF GOD

i

THE other sort is, I say, of those that long and desire to be comforted of God. And, as I told you before, they have an undoubted great cause of comfort, even in that point alone, that they consider themselves to desire and long to be by Almighty God comforted. This mind of theirs may well be cause of great comfort unto them for two great considerations. The one is, that they see themself seek for their comfort where they cannot fail to find it. For God both can give them comfort, and will. He can, for He is Almighty: He will, for He is all good, and hath Himself promised, *Petite, et accipietis*—Ask, and ye shall have.* He that hath faith (as he must needs have that shall take comfort) cannot doubt but that God will surely keep his promise. And therefore hath he a great cause to be of good comfort, as I say, in that he considereth, that he longeth to be comforted

* Matth. vii.

by Him, which his faith maketh him sure will not fail to comfort him.

ii

BUT here consider this, that I speak here of him that in tribulation longeth to be comforted by God ; and it is he that referreth the manner of his comforting to God, holding himself content, whether it be by the taking away or the minishment of the tribulation itself, or by the giving him patience and spiritual consolation therein. For of him that only longeth to have God take his trouble from him, we cannot so well warrant that mind for a cause of so great comfort. For both may he desire that, that never mindeth to be the better ; and may miss also the effect of his desire, because his request is haply not good for himself. And of this kind of longing and requiring we shall have occasion farther to speak hereafter. But he which referring the manner of his comfort unto God, desireth of God to be comforted, asking a thing so lawful and so pleasant unto God that He cannot fail to speed : and therefore hath he (as I say) great cause to take comfort in the very desire itself.

iii

ANOTHER cause hath he to take of that desire a very great occasion of comfort. For sith his desire is good, and declareth unto himself that he hath in God a good faith, it is a good token unto him that he is not an object cast out of God's gracious favour, while he perceiveth that God hath put such a virtuous well ordered appetite in his mind. For as every evil mind cometh of the world, and ourself, and the devil, so is every such good mind either immediately, or by the mean of our good angel, or other gracious occasion, inspired into man's heart by the goodness of God Himself. And what a comfort then may this be unto us, when we by that desire perceive a sure undoubted token, that toward our final salvation our Saviour is himself so graciously busy about us.

Chapter V

COMFORT TO BE SOUGHT AS GOD WILLS

i

A MAN may many times well and without sin desire of God the tribulation to be taken from him; but neither may we desire that in every case, nor yet very well in no case (except very few), but under a certain condition, either expressed or implied. For tribulations are (ye wot well) of many sundry kinds: some by loss of goods or possessions; some by the sickness of ourself, and some by the loss of friends, or by some other pain put unto our bodies; some by the dread of losing those things that we fain would save, under which fear fall all the same things that we have spoken before. For we may fear loss of goods or possessions, or the loss of our friends, their grief and trouble, or our own; by sickness, imprisonment, or other bodily pain we may be troubled with the dread of death, and many a good man is troubled most of all with the fear of that thing, which he that most need

hath fearest least of all, that is to wit, the fear of losing through deadly sin the life of his silly soul. And this last kind of tribulation, as the sorest tribulation of all, though we touched here and there some pieces thereof before, yet the chief part and the principal point will I reserve, to treat apart effectually that matter in the last end.

ii

BUT now, as I said, where the kinds of tribulation are so divers, some of these tribulations a man may pray God take from him, and take some comfort in the trust that God will so do. And therefore against hunger, sickness, and bodily hurt, and against the loss of either body or soul, men may lawfully many times pray to the goodness of God, either for themself or their friend. And towards this purpose are expressly prayed many devout orisons in the common service of our Mother Holy Church. And towards our help in some of these things serve some of the petitions in the *Pater-noster*,* wherein we pray daily for our daily food, and to be preserved from the fall in temptation, and to be delivered from evil. But yet may we not always pray for the taking away from us of every kind of temptation. For if a

* Matth. vi.

man should in every sickness pray for his health again, when should he shew himself content to die and to depart unto God? And that mind must a man have, ye wot well, or else it will not be well.

iii

ONE tribulation is it to good men, to feel in themself the conflict of the flesh against the soul, the rebellion of sensuality against the rule and governance of reason, the relics that remain in mankind of old original sin, of which St. Paul so sore complaineth in his Epistle to the Romans.* And yet may we not pray, while we stand in this life, to have this kind of tribulation utterly taken from us. For it is left us by God's ordinance to strive against it, and fight withal, and by reason and grace to master it, and use it for the matter of our merit. For the salvation of our soul may we boldly pray; for grace may we boldly pray; for faith, for hope, and for charity, and for every such virtue as shall serve us to heaven-ward. But as for all other things before remembered, in which is conceived the matter of every kind of tribulation, we may never well make prayers so precisely but that we must express or imply a condition

* Rom. vii.

therein ; that is to wit, that if God see the contrary before us, we refer it whole to His will, and instead of our grief taking away, pray that God may send us of His goodness either spiritual comfort to take it gladly, or strength at leastwise to bear it patiently. For if we determine with ourself that we will take no comfort in nothing, but in the taking of our tribulation from us ; then either prescribe we to God, that we will He shall no better turn do us, though He would, than we will ourself appoint Him ; or else do we declare that what thing is best for us, ourself can better tell than He.

iv

AND therefore, I say, let us in tribulation desire His comfort and help, and let us remit the manner of that comfort unto His own high pleasure ; which, when we do, let us nothing doubt, but that like as His high wisdom better seeth what is best for us than we can see ourself, so shall His high sovereign goodness give us that thing that shall indeed be best. For else if we will presume to stand to our own choice, except it so be that God offer us the choice Himself (as He did to David in the choice of his own punishment, after his high pride conceived in the numbering

of his people*), we may foolishly choose the worst; and by the prescribing unto God ourself so precisely what we will that He shall do for us (except that of His gracious favour He reject our folly), He shall for indignation grant us our own request, and after shall we well find that it shall turn us to harm.

V

HOW many men attain health of body, that were better for their souls' health their bodies were sick still! How many get out of prison, that hap on such harm abroad as the prison should have kept them from! How many that have been loth to lose their worldly goods, have in keeping of their goods soon after lost their lives! So blind is our mortality, and so unaware what will fall, so unsure also what manner of mind we will have tomorrow, that God could not lightly do man a more vengeance than in this world to grant him his own foolish wishes. What wit have we (poor fools) to wit what will serve us, when the blessed Apostle himself, in his sore tribulation,† praying thrice unto God to take it away from him, was answered again by God in a manner that he was but a fool in asking that request,

* 2 Reg. xxiv. † 2 Cor. xii.

but that the help of God's grace in that tribulation to strengthen him was far better for him, than to take the tribulation from him? And therefore, by experience perceiving well the truth of that lesson, he giveth us good warning not to be bold of our own minds when we require aught of God, nor to be precise in our askings, but refer the choice to God at His own pleasure. For His own Holy Spirit so sore desireth our weal, that, as men say, He groaneth for us in such wise as no tongue can tell. *Nos autem* (saith St. Paul)* *quid oremus ut oportet, nescimus; sed ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus* —We, what we may pray for that were behoveable for us, cannot ourself tell: but the Spirit Himself desireth for us with unspeakable groanings.

VI

AND therefore, I say, for conclusion of this point, let us never ask of God precisely our own ease by delivering us from our tribulation, but pray for His aid and comfort, by which ways Himself shall best like; and then may we take comfort, even of our such request. For both be we sure that this mind cometh of God, and also be we very sure that as He beginneth

* Rom. viii.

to work with us, so (but if ourself flit from Him) He will not fail to tarry with us ; and then, He dwelling with us, what trouble can do us harm ? *Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos ?*—If God be with us (saith St. Paul), who can stand against us ?*

* Rom. viii.

Chapter VI

HOW TRIBULATION DRAWETH MAN TO GOD

i

WO are they who seek not comfort from God, yet tribulation is itself a means by which men are drawn from that comfortless state and are drawn to Him. And that is one of the causes for which God sendeth it unto man. For albeit that pain was ordained of God for the punishment of sins (for which they that can never now but sin, can never be but ever punished in hell), yet in this world, in which His high mercy giveth men space to be better, the punishment by tribulation that He sendeth serveth ordinarily for a mean of amendment.

St. Paul* was himself sore against Christ, till Christ gave him a great fall and threw him to the ground, and strake him stark blind: and with that tribulation he turned to Him at the first word, and God was his physician, and healed him soon after both in body and soul by His minister

* Acts ix.

Ananias, and made him His blessed apostle.

ii

SOME are in the beginning of tribulation very stubborn and stiff against God, and yet at length tribulation bringeth them home. The proud king Pharaoh* did abide and endure two or three of the first plagues, and would not once stoop at them. But then God laid on a sorer lash that made him cry to Him for help, and then sent he for Moses and Aaron,† and confessed himself a sinner, and God for good and righteous, and prayed them to pray for him, and to withdraw that plague, and he would let them go. But when his tribulation was withdrawn, then was he naught again. So was his tribulation occasion of his profit, and his help again cause of his harm. For his tribulation made him call to God, and His help made hard his heart again. Many a man that in an easy tribulation faileth to seek his ease in the pastime of worldly fantasies, findeth in a greater pain all those comforts so feeble, that he is fain to fall to the seeking of God's help. And therefore is, I say, the very tribulation itself many times a mean to bring the man to the taking of the afore-remembered comfort therein: that

* Exod. vii. † Exod. viii.

is, to wit, to the desire of comfort given by God, which desire of God's comfort is, as I have proved you, great cause of comfort itself.

Chapter VII

PENAL TRIBULATION, YET ALSO REMEDIAL

i

THEY that fall in tribulation through their own certain well-deserving deed open and known unto themself, as where we fall in a sickness following upon our own gluttonous feasting, or a man that is punished for his own open fault. These tribulations may seem discomfortable, in that a man may be sorry to think himself the cause of his own harm ; yet hath he good cause of comfort in them, if he consider that he may make them medicinable for himself, if he himself will. For whereas there was due to that sin (except it were purged here) a far greater punishment after this world in another place ; this worldly tribulation of pain and punishment, by God's good provision for him put upon him here in this world before, shall by the mean of Christ's passion (if the man will in true faith and good hope, by meek and patient sufferance

of his tribulation, so make it), serve him for a sure medicine, to cure him and clearly discharge him of all the sickness and disease of those pains, that else he should suffer after.

ii

FOR such is the great goodness of Almighty God, that He punisheth not one thing twice. And although this punishment is put unto the man, not of his own election and free choice, but so by force as he would fain avoid it, and falleth in it against his will, and therefore seemeth worthy no thank; yet so far passeth the great goodness of God the poor imperfect goodness of man, that though men make their reckoning one here with another such, God yet of His high bounty in man's account toward Him alloweth it far otherwise. For though that otherwise a man fall in his pain by his own fault, and also first against his will, yet as soon as he confesseth his fault, and applieth his will to be content to suffer that pain and punishment for the same, and waxeth sorry, not for that only that he shall sustain such punishment, but for that also that he hath offended God, and thereby deserved much more: Our Lord from that time counteth it not for pain

taken against His will, but it shall be a marvellous good medicine and work (as a willingly taken pain) the purgation and cleansing of his soul, with gracious remission of his sin, and of the far greater pain that else had been prepared therefor peradventure in hell for ever. For many there are undoubtedly, that would else drive forth and die in their deadly sin, which yet in such tribulation, feeling their own frailty so effectually, and the false flattering world failing them so fully, turn goodly to God and call for mercy, and by grace make virtue of necessity, and make a medicine of their malady, taking their trouble meekly, and make a right goodly end.

iii

CONSIDER well the story of Achan, that committed sacrilege at the great city of Hierico, whereupon God took a great vengeance upon the children of Israel, and after told them the cause, and bade them go seek the fault and try it out by lots ; when the lot fell upon the very man that did it, being tried by the falling first upon his tribe, and then upon his house, and finally upon his person, he might well see that he was deprehended

and taken against his will, but yet, at the good exhortation of Josue,* saying unto him, *Fili mi, da gloriam Domino Deo Israel, et confitere, ac indica mihi quid feceris, ne abscondas*—Mine own son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and confess, and shew me what thou hast done, hide it not—he confessed humbly the theft and meekly took his death therefor, and had, I doubt not, both strength and comfort in his pain, and died a very good man: which, if he had never come to tribulation, had been in peril never haply to have had just remorse thereof in all his whole life, but might have died wretchedly, and gone to the devil eternally. And thus made this thief a good medicine of his well-deserved pain and tribulation. Consider the well-converted thief that hung on Christ's right hand.† Did not he (by his meek sufferance and humble knowledge of his fault, asking forgiveness of God, and yet content to suffer for his sin) make of his just punishment and well-deserved tribulation a very good special medicine to cure him of all pain in the other world, and win him eternal salvation? And thus, I say, that this kind of tribulation, though it seem the most base and the least comfortable, is yet (if the man will so make it) a very marvellous wholesome medicine;

* Josue vii. † Lucæ xxiii.

and may therefore be to the man that will so consider it a great cause of comfort and spiritual consolation.

Chapter VIII

TRIBULATION, APPARENTLY UNDESERVED, REMEDIAL

1

IT may be that we know no certain cause deserving the present trouble, as we certainly know that upon such a pursuit we fall in such a sickness; or as the thief knoweth that for such a certain theft he is fallen into such a certain punishment. But yet sith we seldom lack faults against God, worthy and well deserving great punishment: indeed we may well think, and wisdom it is so to do, that with sin we have deserved it, and that God for some sin sendeth it, though we certainly know not ourself for which. But yet may then this kind of tribulation be to some men of more sober living, and thereby of the more clear conscience, somewhat a little more comfortable. For though they may none otherwise reckon themselves than sinners (for as St. Paul saith,* *Nihil mihi conscius sum, sed non in hoc justificatus sum*—My conscience grudgeth me not of any thing, but yet am I not thereby

* 1 Cor. iv.

justified—and as St. John saith,* *Si dixerimus, quin peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus et veritas in nobis non est*—If we say that we have no sin in us, we beguile ourself, and truth is there not in us), yet forasmuch as the cause is to them not so certain as it is to the other afore remembered in the first kind, and that it is also certain that God sometime sendeth tribulation for keeping and preserving a man from such sin as he should else fall in, and sometime also for exercise of patience and increase of merit, great cause of increase in comfort have those folk of the clearer conscience in the fervour of their tribulation, in that they may take the comfort of the double medicine, and of that is the kind which we shall finally speak of that I call better than medicinable. But as I have before spoken of this kind of tribulation, how it is medicinable in that it cureth the sin past, and purchaseth remission of the pain due therefor ; so let us somewhat consider how this tribulation sent us by God is medicinable, in that it preserve thus from the sins into which we were else like to fall.

ii

IF that thing be a good medicine that restoreth us our health when we lose

* 1 Joan i.

it, as good a medicine must this needs be that preserveth our health while we have it, and suffereth us not to fall into the painful sickness that must after drive us to a painful plaster. Now seeth God sometime that worldly wealth is with one (that is yet good) coming upon him so fast, that foreseeing how much weight of worldly wealth the man may bear, and how much will overcharge him, and enhance his heart up so high that grace shall fall from him low; God of his goodness, I say, preventeth his fall, and sendeth him tribulation by time while he is yet good, to gar him ken his Maker, and by less liking the false flattering world, set a cross upon the ship of his heart, and bear a low sail thereon, that the boisterous blast of pride blow him not under the water.

Some lovely young lady, lo! that is yet good enough, God sees a storm cometh towards her that if she preserve her health and looks, would utterly overwhelm her. But God loving her more tenderly than to suffer her to fall into a shameful mortal sin, sendeth her a goodly fair fervent fever that maketh her bones rattle, wasteth her flesh, and turneth her hair to the colour of a kite's claw, and her attractiveness gone the danger is no more.

Chapter IX

TRIBULATION SENT ONLY FOR THE EXERCISE OF PATIENCE

i

THIS third kind of tribulation falleth upon those who suffer for the maintenance of justice or the defence of God's cause. For if I should hap to find a man that had long lived a very virtuous life, and had at last happened to fall into the Turks' hands, and there did abide by the truth of his faith, and with the suffering of all kind of torments taken upon his body, still did teach and testify the truth, if I should in his passion give him spiritual comfort, might I be bold to tell him no farther, but that he should take patience in his pain, and that God sendeth it him for his sin, and that he is well worthy to have it although it were yet much more? He might then well answer me and such other comforters, as Job* answered his, *Consolatores onerosi omnes vos estis*—Burdenous and heavy

* Job xvi.

comforters be you. Nay, I would not fail to bid him boldly, while I should see him in his passion, cast sin, and hell, and purgatory, and all upon the devil's pate, and doubt not, but like as if he gave over his hold, all his merit were lost, and he turned to misery; so if he stand and persevere still in the confession of his faith, all his whole pain shall turn all into glory.

ii

YEA, more shall I yet say than this: that if there were a Christian man that had among those infidels committed a very deadly crime, such as were worthy death, not by their laws only, but by Christ's too, as manslaughter or adultery, or such other thing like; if when he were taken he were offered pardon of his life, upon condition that he should forsake the faith of Christ; if this man would now rather suffer death than so do, should I comfort him in his pain but as I would a malefactor? Nay, this man, though he should have died for his sin, dieth now for Christ's sake, while he might live still if he would forsake Him. The bare patient taking of his death should have served for satisfaction of his sin through the merit of Christ's passion; I mean, without help

of which no pain of our own could be satisfactory. But now shall Christ for his forsaking of his own life in the honour of his faith, forgive the pain of all his sins of his mere liberality, and accept all the pain of his death for merit of reward in heaven, and shall assign no part thereof to the payment of his debt in purgatory, but shall take it all as an offering, and requite it with all glory; and this man among Christian men, all had he been before a devil, nothing after would, I doubt, to take him for a martyr.

iii

AS regards the fear of persecution, I would urge the example of such as suffer tribulation for maintenance of right and justice and that rather choose to take harm than do wrong in any manner of matter. Further, every man on whom persecution falls may in his deep trouble say to himself the words that Christ has taught him for his comfort, *Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter justitiam quoniam ipsorum est regnum cælorum*— Blessed be they that suffer persecution for justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Here is an high comfort, lo! for them that are in that case. And in this case their own

conscience can shew it them, and so may fulfil their hearts with spiritual joy, that the pleasure may far surmount the heaviness and the grief of all their temporal trouble.

Chapter X

PENAL TRIBULATION ALSO MERITORIOUS

i

TRIBULATION sent as punishment for sin not only through Christ's passion refraineth us from sin in which we should otherwise fall, and makes satisfaction for them, thus shortening our purgatorial pains, but is further meritorious. For surely those pains here sent us for our sins, in whatsoever wise they happen unto us, be our sin never so sore, nor never so open and evident unto ourself and all the world too ; yet if we pray for grace to take it meekly and patiently, and confessing to God that it is far over too little for our fault, beseech Him yet, nevertheless, that sith we shall come hence so void of all good works whereof we should have any reward in Heaven, to be not only so merciful to us, as to take that our present tribulation in relief of our pains in purgatory, but also so gracious unto us as to take our patience therein

for a matter of merit and reward in Heaven : I verily trust, and nothing doubt it, but that God shall of His high bounty grant us our boon.

ii

FOR likewise as in hell pain serveth only for punishment without any manner of purging, because all possibility of purging is past ; and in purgatory punishment serveth for only purging, because the place of deserving is past ; so while we be yet in this world, in which is our place and our time of merit and well deserving, the tribulation that is sent us for our sin here shall (if we faithfully so desire), beside the cleansing and purging of our pain, serve us also for increase of reward. And so shall, I suppose and trust in God's goodness, all such penance and good works as a man willingly performeth enjoined by his ghostly father in confession, or which he willingly farther doth of his own devotion beside.

iii

FOR though man's penance, with all the good works that he can do, be not able to satisfy of themself for the least sin that we do ; yet the liberal goodness

of God through the merit of Christ's bitter passion, without which all our works could neither satisfy nor deserve, nor yet do not in deed neither merit nor satisfy so much as a spoonful to a great vesselful, in comparison of the merit and satisfaction that Christ hath merited and satisfied for us Himself: this liberal goodness of God, I say, shall yet at our faithful instance and request cause our penance and tribulation, patiently taken in this world, to serve us in the other world, both for release and reward, tempered after such rate as His high goodness and wisdom shall see convenient for us, whereof our blind mortality cannot here imagine nor devise the stint. And thus hath yet even the first kind of tribulation and the most base, though not fully so great as the second, and very far less than the third, far greater cause of comfort yet than I spake of before.

Chapter XI

REPLY TO PROTESTANT OBJECTIONS

i

FIRST, as for purgatory, though they think there be none, yet since they deny not that all the corps of Christendom by so many hundred years have believed the contrary; and among them all the old interpreters of Scripture, from the Apostles' days down to our own time, of whom they deny not many for holy saints; I dare not believe these men against all those, these men must of their courtesy hold my poor fear excused. And I beseech Our Lord heartily for them, that when they depart out of this wretched world, they find no purgatory at all: so God keep them from hell.

ii

AND as for the merit of man in his good works, neither are they that deny it full agreed among themself, nor any man is there almost of them all that,

sith they began to write, hath not somewhat changed and varied from himself; and for the more part are thus far agreed with us, that like as we grant them that no good work is aught worth to heavenward without faith, and that no good work of man is rewardable in Heaven of his own nature, but through the mere goodness of God that list to set so high a price upon so poor a thing; and that this price God setteth through Christ's passion, and for that also that they be His own.

iii

STRIVE will I not with them for this matter now, but yet this I trust to the great goodness of God, that if the question hang on the narrow point, while Christ saith in the Scripture* in so many places that men shall in Heaven be rewarded for their works, He shall never suffer our souls that are but mean-witted men, and can understand His words but as Himself hath set them, and as old holy Saints have construed them before, and as all Christian people this thousand year have believed, to be damned for lack of perceiving such a sharp subtle thing; specially sith some men that have right good wits, and are beside that right well

* Matth. v

learned too, can in no wise perceive for what cause or why these folk that from good work take away the reward, and give the reward all whole to faith alone, give the reward to faith, rather than to charity. For this grant they themself, that faith serveth of nothing but if she be companied with her sister charity. And then saith the Scripture too :* *Fides, Spes, Charitas : tria hæc, major autem horum est Charitas*—Of these three virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, of all these three the greatest is Charity—and therefore as worthy to have the thank of Faith. Howbeit, as I have said, I will not strive therefor, nor indeed, as our matter standeth, I shall not greatly need. For if they say that he which suffereth tribulation or martyrdom for the faith, shall have high reward, not for his work but for his well-working faith ; yet sith that they grant that have it he shall, the cause of high comfort in the third degree standeth, and that is, you wot well, the effect of all my purpose.

* 1 Cor. xiii.

Chapter XII

DANGER OF CONTINUAL PROSPERITY

i

WE cannot better perceive the profit and thereby the comfort begotten by tribulation than by considering what harm the task is, and thereby what discomfort the lack thereof should be to them that never have it. All holy men agree, and all the Scripture is full, and our own experience proveth at our eye, that we be not come into this wretched world to dwell here, nor have not (as St. Paul saith)* our dwelling city here, but we are seeking for the city that is to come ; and therefore St. Paul sheweth us that we do seek for it, as they that are good folk, and fain would come thither, do. For surely whoso setteth so little thereby that he listeth not to seek therefor, it will, I fear me, be long ere he come thereat, and marvellous great grace if he ever come thither. *Sic currite*, saith St. Paul,† *ut comprehen-*

* Heb. xiii. † 1 Cor. ix.

datis—Run so, that you may get it. If it must then be gotten with running, when shall he come at it that list not once step toward it ? Now because that this world is, as I tell you, not our eternal dwelling, but our little while wandering, God would that we should in such wise use it, as folk that were weary of it ; and that we should in this vale of labour, toil, tears, and misery, not look for rest and ease, game, pleasure, wealth and felicity. For they that so do fare like a foul fellow, that going towards his own house where he should be wealthy, would for a tapster's pleasure become an hostler by the way and die in a stable, and never come at home. And would God that those that drown themselves in the desire of this world's wretched wealth, were not yet more fools than so !

ii

BUT, alas ! their folly as far passeth the foolishness of that other fond fellow, as there is distance between the heighth of Heaven and the very depth of hell. For our Saviour saith, *Væ vobis qui ridetis nunc, quia lugebitis et flebitis*—Wo may you be that laugh now, for you shall wail and weep.* *Est tempus flendi* (saith the Scripture) *et est tempus ridendi*

* Luc. vi.

—There is time of weeping and there is time of laughing.* But, as you see, He setteth the weeping time before ; for that is the time of this wretched world, and the laughing time shall come after in Heaven. There is also a time of sowing, and a time of reaping too. Now must we in this world sow, that we may in the other world reap ; and in this short sowing time of this weeping world must we water our seed with the showers of our tears ; and then shall we have in Heaven a merry laughing harvest for ever. *Euntes ibant et flebant* (saith the prophet) *mittentes semina sua*— They went forth and sowed their seeds weeping.† But what, saith he, shall follow thereof ? *Venientes autem venient cum exultatione, portantes manipulos suos*— They shall come again more than laughing, with great joy and exultation, with their handfuls of corn in their hands. Lo, they that in their going home towards Heaven sow their seed with weeping, shall at the day of judgement come to their bodies again, with everlasting plenty, laughing.

iii

AND for to prove that this life is no laughing time, but rather the time of weeping ; we find that our Saviour

* Eccl. iii. † Psalm cxxv.

Himself wept twice or thrice, but never find we that He laughed so much as once. I will not swear that He never did, but at the least wise He left us no ensample of it. But, on the other side, He left us ensample of weeping.* Of weeping have we matter enough, both for our own sins, and for other folks' too ; for surely so should we do, bewail their wretched sins, and not be glad to detract them, nor envy them neither. Alas ! silly souls, what cause is there to envy them that are ever wealthy in this world, and ever out of tribulation ? which (as Job saith) *ducunt in bonis dies suos, et in puncto ad inferna descendunt*—lead all their days in wealth, and in a moment of an hour descend into their graves, and be painfully buried in hell.† St. Paul saith unto the Hebrews, that God those that He loveth, He chastiseth. *Et flagellat omnem filium quem recipit*—And He scourgeth every son of His that He receiveth.‡ St. Paul saith also, *Per multas tribulationes oportet nos introire in regnum Dei*—By many tribulations must we go into the kingdom of God. § And no marvel, for our Saviour Christ said so Himself unto His two disciples that were going into the

* Our Saviour wept upon the city of Jerusalem (Luc. xix). Upon Lazarus (John ii). And in His passion (Heb. v).

† Job xxi. ‡ Hebræ. xii. § Act. xiv.

castle of Emmaus, *An nesciebatis, quia oportebat Christum pati, et sic introire in regnum suum?*—Knew you not, that Christ must suffer, and so go into His kingdom! * And would we, that are servants, look for more privilege in our Master's house than our Master Himself? Would we get into His Kingdom with ease, when He Himself got not into His own but by pain? His Kingdom hath He ordained for His disciples, and He saith unto us all, *Qui vult esse meus discipulus, tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me*—If any man will be my disciple, let him learn of me to do as I have done,† take his cross of tribulation upon his back and follow me. He saith not here, lo! let him laugh, and make merry.

iv

NOW, if Heaven serve but for Christ's disciples, and they be those that take their cross of tribulation; when shall these folk come there, that never have tribulation? And if it be true that St. Paul saith, that God chastiseth all them that He loveth, and scourgeth every child whom He receiveth,‡ and to Heaven shall none come but such as He loveth and receiveth, when shall they then come thither

* Lucæ. xxiv. † Matth. xvi.
‡ Heb. xii.

whom He never chastiseth, nor never doth vouchsafe to file His hands upon them, nor give them so much as one lash? And if we cannot (as St. Paul saith we cannot) come to Heaven but by many tribulations,* how shall they come thither, then, that never have none at all? Thus see we well by the very Scripture itself how true the words are of holy Saints, that with one voice in a manner say all one thing, that is to wit, that we shall not have both continual wealth in this world and in the other too. And therefore, sith they that in this world without any tribulation enjoy their long continual course of never interrupted prosperity, have a great cause of fear and discomfort lest they be far fallen out of God's favour, and stand deep in His indignation and displeasure, while He never sendeth them tribulation, which He is ever wont to send them whom He loveth; they, therefore, I say, that are in tribulation, have on the other side a great cause to take in their grief great inward comfort and spiritual consolation.

* Act. xiv.

Chapter XIII

FLATTERERS

i

THERE are those who tell the great that they may make merry all their lives and gain Heaven at the end. But surely such advisers flatter them either for lucre or fear. Some of them think peradventure thus:—This man maketh much of me now, and giveth me money also to fast, and watch, and pray for him, but so I fear me would he do no more, if I should go tell him now, that all that I do for him will not serve him, but if he go fast, and watch, and pray for himself too. For if I should see thereto and say farther, that my diligent intercession for him should (I trust) be the mean that God should the sooner give him grace to amend, and fast, and watch, and pray, and take affliction in his own body for the bettering of his sinful soul, he would be wondrous wroth with that. For he would be loth to have any such grace at all as should make him go leave off any

of his mirth, and so sit and mourn for his sin. Such mind as this, lo! have there some of those that are not unlearned, and have worldly wit at will, which tell great men such tales as perilously beguile them for fear like the flatterer lest by a true tale they should jeopardise their lucre.

ii

SOME are there also that such tales tell them for consideration of another fear. For seeing the man so sore set on his pleasure that they despair any amendment of him whatsoever they should shew him, and then seeing also beside that the man doth no great harm, but of a gentle nature doth some good men some good; they pray God themself to send him grace, and so they let him lie lame still in his fleshly lusts *ad probaticam piscinam, expectantes aquæ motum*,* at the pool that the Gospel speaketh of beside the Temple, wherein they washed the sheep for the sacrifice, and they tarry to see the water stirred. And when his good angel coming from God shall once begin to stir the water of his heart, and move him to the lowly meekness of a simple sheep, then if he call them to him they will tell him another

* Joan. v.

tale, and help to bear him and plunge him into the pool of penance over the hard ears. But in the meanwhile, for fear lest when he would wax never the better he would wax much the worse, and from gentle, forsooth, sweet and courteous, wax angry, rough, forward, and sour, and thereupon be troublous and tedious to the world; to make fair weather withal, they give him fair words for the while, and put him in good comfort, and let him for the remnant stand at his own adventure. And in such wise deal they with him as the mother doth sometime with her child, which, when the little boy will not rise in time for her, but lie still a-bed and slug, and when he is up weepeth because he hath lain so long, fearing to be beaten at school for his late coming thither; she telleth him then that it is but early days, and he shall come time enough, and biddeth him go, good son, I warrant thee, I have sent to thy master myself; take thy bread and butter with thee, thou shalt not be beaten at all. And thus (so she may send him merry forth at the door, that he weep not in her sight at home) she studieth not much upon the matter, though he be taken tardy, and beaten when he cometh to school. Surely thus, I fear me, fare there many friars and States' chaplains too, in comfort giving to great men when they

be loth to displease them. I cannot commend their thus doing, but surely I fear me thus they do.

Chapter XIV

WEAL OR WO, WHICH BEST?

i

THE point between us is not whether every prosperity is a perilous token but whether continuous wealth in this world without any tribulation be a fearful sign of God's indignation. Your chief objections to this theory are (1) that for princes and prelates and every man for other we pray all for perpetual prosperity, and that in common prayers of the Church; (2) If prosperity were so perilous and tribulation so profitable, every man ought to pray to send other sorrow.

In answer, then, first, what is tribulation? Tribulation is every such thing as troubleth a man in body or mind, and surely the prick that pierceth the mind surpasseth the pain that the body feeleth, as a thorn in the heart is more hurtful than one stuck in the heel.

ii

THERE be then more kinds of tribulation than you peradventure may have thought of, and many good men may have tribulation known only to themselves. Are not temptations of the devil world and flesh great inward trouble to a good man's heart? Nay, for such as like unreasonable beasts find no trouble in temptation, but only matter for bodily pleasure. If they be baffled in pursuit of the desired object their failure will so torment them that all the pleasure they can take beside for lack of that one will not satisfy him a pin. And I dare affirm that the pain in resisting, and the fear of following, that many a good man hath in temptation is an anguish and grief every deal as great as his.

The prayer, then, for continual prosperity, without other condition, added or implied, were inordinate and were very childish. Besides this, the Church you wot rather advises every man to fast, watch, and pray, both to tame his flesh and to mourn for his past sins; and where a man doth this, does it cease to be tribulation because thus self-inflicted? Thus no man prayeth for continual prosperity for himself or for any one else, and that is my answer to your first objection. You

instance Lazar, who died in poverty and pain, and Abraham, who died rich, as both reaching Heaven, to show that the latter state is as meritorious as the former. But had not Abraham suffered also in going out to a strange land or in putting away Ishmael and his mother, or in his oblation of Isaac in sacrifice? Then as Lazarus bore his pain patiently, so did Abraham, and earned, moreover, great merit as Patriarch of the Faith. So that Abraham is in no way to your purpose.

iii

BUT look a little longer upon the rich Abraham and Lazar, the poor, and as we shall see Lazar set in wealth somewhat under the rich Abraham, so we shall see another rich man lie full low beneath Lazar, crying and calling out of his fiery couch that Lazar might with a drop of water falling from his finger's end a little cool and refresh the tip of his burning tongue. Consider well now what Abraham answered to the rich wretch: *Fili, recordare quia recepisti bona in vita tua, et Lazarus similiter mala: nunc autem hic consolatur, tu vero cruciaris*—Son, remember that thou hast in thy life received wealth, and Lazar in likewise pain; but now receiveth he comfort, and thou sorrow,

pain, and torment.* Christ describeth his wealth and his prosperity, gay and soft apparel, with royal delicate fare, continually day by day. *Epulabatur* (saith Our Saviour) *quotidie splendide*—He did fare royally every day. His wealth was continual, lo! no time of tribulation between. And Abraham telleth him the same tale, that he had taken his wealth in this world, and Lazarus likewise his pain: and that they had now changed each to the clean contrary: poor Lazar from tribulation into wealth, and the rich man from his continual prosperity into perpetual pain. Here was laid expressly to Lazar no very great virtue by name, nor to this rich glutton no great heinous crime, but the taking of his continual ease and pleasure without any tribulation or grief, whereof grew sloth and negligence to think upon the poor man's pain. For that ever himself saw Lazarus, and wist him die for hunger at his door, that laid neither Christ nor Abraham to his charge. And therefore, cousin, this story, lo! of which by occasion of Abraham and Lazar you put me in remembrance, well declareth what peril is in continual worldly wealth, and contrariwise what comfort cometh of tribulation.

* 1 Cor. v.

Chapter XV

THE WEB OF LIFE

i

YOU ask if tribulation is so profitable, why should any man pray for himself or another to have it withdrawn? Tribulation is indeed so profitable that one might doubt as to praying for its deliverance, but that God, who teacheth us the one teacheth us also the other. He bids us and our neighbour also to bear our pain patiently, and to pray for its deliverance, and since He teaches both I need not break my brain to reconcile what seems contradictory. If He send us the plague of pestilence, He will that we shall patiently take it: but yet will He that we let us blood, and lay plasters to draw it, and ripe it, and lance it, and get it away. Both these points teacheth God in Scripture in more than many places. Fasting is better than eating, and more thank hath of God; and yet will God that we shall eat. Praying is better than drinking, and much more pleasant to God;

and yet will God that we shall drink. Waking in good business is much more acceptable to God than sleeping; and yet will God that we shall sleep.

ii

GOD hath given us our bodies here to keep, and will that we maintain them to do Him service with, till He send for us hence. Now can we not tell surely how much tribulation may mar it, or peradventure hurt the soul also? Wherefore the Apostle, after that he had excommunicated the incestuous Corinthian, yet after that he had been awhile accursed and punished for his sin, the Apostle commanded them charitably to receive him again and give him consolation. *Ne forte abundamtiori tristitia absorbeatur*—Lest peradventure the greatness of his sorrow should swallow him up.* And therefore when God sendeth the tempest, He will that the shipmen shall get them to their tackling, and do the best they can for themself, that the seas eat them not up. For help ourselves as well as we can, He can make His plague as sore, and as long lasting, as Himself list. And as He will that we do for ourself, so will He that we do for our neighbours too: and that

* 2 Cor. ii.

we shall be in this world each to other piteous, and not *sine affectione*, for which the Apostle rebuketh them that lack their tender affections here: so that of charity sorry should we be for their pain too, upon whom (for cause necessary) we be driven ourself to put it. And whoso saith, that for pity of his neighbour's soul He will have none of his body, let him be sure that (as St. John saith) he that loveth not his neighbour whom he seeth, loveth God but a little whom he seeth not.*

iii

GOD sendeth us also such tribulation sometime, because His pleasure is to have us pray unto Him for help. And therefore, when St. Peter was in prison, the Scripture sheweth that the whole Church without intermission prayed incessantly for him; and that at their fervent prayer God by miracle delivered him.† When the disciples in the tempest stood in fear of drowning, they prayed unto Christ and said, *Salva nos, Domine, perimus*—Save us, Lord, we perish.‡ And then at their prayer He shortly ceased the tempest. And now we see proved often, that in sore weather or sickness, by general processions God giveth gracious help.

* 1 Joan. iv. † Act. xii. ‡ Matth. viii.

And many a man in his great pain and sickness by calling upon God is marvellously made whole. This is God's goodness, that because in wealth we remember Him not, but forget to pray to Him, sendeth us sorrow and sickness to force us to draw toward Him, and compelleth us to call upon Him and pray for release of our pain. Whereby when we learn to know Him, and seek to Him, we take a good occasion to fall after into farther grace.

Chapter XVI

DIVERS EFFECTS OF TRIBULATION

i

SOME by tribulation are brought to God back from their sins, and die in peace. Others refuse the Divine call and die in despair. Others surround themselves with worldly counsellors and occupy themselves only with fond phantasies or without thought of God till the end comes. Some I have seen in their last sickness sit up in their death-bed underpropped with pillows, take their playfellows to them, and comfort themselves with cards, and this (they said) did ease them well to put phantasies out of their heads: and what phantasies trow you? Such as I told you right now, of their own lewd life and peril of their soul, of Heaven and of hell that irked them to think of, and therefore cast it out with card play as long as ever they might, till the pure pangs of death pulled their heart from their play, and put them in a case they could not reckon their game. And then

left they their gamners, and slyly slunk away ; and long was it not ere they gasped up the ghost. And what game they then came to, that God knoweth, and not I. I pray God it were good, but I fear it very sore.

ii

SOME men are there also that do (as did King Saul) in tribulation go seek unto the devil.* This king had commanded all such to be destroyed, as used the false abominable superstition of this ungracious witchcraft and necromancy, and yet fell he to such folly afterward himself, that ere he went to battle he sought unto a witch, and besought her to raise up a dead man to tell him how he should speed.† Now had God shewed him before by Samuel, that he should come to nought, and he went about none amendment, but waxed worse and worse, so that God list not to look to him. And when he sought by the prophets to have answer of God, there came none answer to him, which thing he thought strange. And because he was not with God heard at his pleasure, he made suit to the devil, desiring a woman by witchcraft to raise up dead Samuel ; but speed had he such thereof,

* 1 Reg. xxvii. † 1 Reg. xv.

so commonly they have all, that in their business meddle with such matters. For an evil answer had he, and an evil speed thereafter, his army discomfited and himself slain. And as it is rehearsed in Paralipomenon,* one cause of his fall was, for lack of trust in God, for which he left to take counsel of God, and fell to seek counsel of the witch† against God's prohibition in the law, and against his own deed, by which he punished and put out all witches so late afore.

iii

SUCH speed let them look for that play the same part, as I see many do, that in a great loss send to such a conjurer to get their gear again: and marvellous things there they see sometime, but never groat of their good again. And many a fond fool there is, that when he lieth sick, will meddle with no physic in no manner wise, but send his cap or his hose to a wise woman, otherwise called a witch. Then sendeth she word again, that she hath spied in his hose where, when he took no heed, he was taken with a sprite between two doors as he went in the twilight, but the sprite would not let

* Lib. i. cap. 10.

† 1 Reg. xxviii. Levi xix, xx.

him feel it in five days after ; and it hath all the while festered in his body, and that is the grief that paineth him so sore. But let him go to no leechcraft, nor any manner of physic, other than good meat and strong drink, for syrups should souse him up. But he shall have five leaves of valerian that she enchanted with a charm, and gathered with her left hand : let him lay those five leaves to his right thumb, not bind it fast to, but let it hang loose thereat by a green thread : he shall never need to change it, look it fall not away, but let it hang till he be whole, and he shall need no more.

In such wise witches, and in such mad medicines have many fools more faith a great deal than in God. And thus, cousin, as I tell you, all these kind of folk that in their tribulation call not upon God, but seek for their help and for their ease otherwhere, to the flesh and the world, and some to the flinging fiend himself ; the tribulation that God's goodness sendeth them for good, themself by their folly turn unto their harm. And they that on the other side seek unto God therein, both comfort and profit they greatly take thereby.

Chapter XVII

THE VALUE OF PRAYER IN PAIN

i

PROSPERITY, you say, brings more comfort than tribulation, for in the former man can thank God both for his bodily ease and the peace of his soul, whereas in tribulation he hath no comfort but in the soul. Now, of this double comfort you may cut off the first. For the prosperous man, though he rightly thank God for His gifts wherein he findeth ease, and may be glad also that he giveth God thanks—yet that he taketh his case hath he little chance of complaint, except you mean the sensual feeling of bodily comfort, as sometimes men say, this good wine comforteth my heart. But comfort rightly means the consolation of good hope of some good growing towards them, not a present pleasure which delighteth and tickleth the body for a while. Now, though a man without patience can have no reward for his pain, yet when his pain is patiently taken for God's sake, and his

will conformed to God's pleasure therein, God rewarded the sufferer after the rate of his pain. But never found I any place in Scripture that I remember, in which, though the wealthy man thanked God for His gift, Our Lord promised any reward in Heaven, because the man took his ease and pleasure here. And therefore, sith I speak but of such comfort as is very comfort indeed, by which a man hath hope of God's favour and remission of his sins, with minishing of his pains in purgatory, or reward else in Heaven : and such comfort cometh of tribulation, and for tribulation well taken, but not for pleasure, though it be well taken ; therefore of your comfort that you double by prosperity, you may, as I told you, cut very well away the half. Now why I give prerogative in comfort unto tribulation far above prosperity, though a man may do well in both : of this thing will I shew you causes two or three.

ii

AS regards the value of prayer. The prayers of him that is in wealth and him that is in woe, if the men be both nought their prayers be both like. For neither hath the one list to pray, nor the other neither. And as the one is let with

his pain, so is the other with his pleasure, saving that the pain stirreth him some time to call upon God in his grief, though the man be right bad, where the pleasure pulleth his mind another way, though the man be merely good. And this point I think there are very few that can (if they say true) say that they find it otherwise. For in tribulation, which cometh, you wot well, in many sundry kinds, any man that is not a dull beast, or a desperate wretch, calleth upon God, not hourly, but right heartily, and setteth his heart full whole upon his request, so sore he longeth for ease and help of his heaviness. But when men are wealthy and well at their ease, while our tongue pattereth upon our prayers apace; good God, how many mad ways our mind wandereth the while! Yet wot I well, that in some tribulation such sore sickness there is, or other grievous bodily pain, that hard it were for a long prayer of Matins: and yet some that be a-dying say full devoutly the seven Psalms, and other prayers, with the priest at their anealing; but those that for the grief of their pain cannot endure to do it, or that be more tender, and lack that strong heart and stomach that some other have, God requireth no such long prayers of them. But the lifting up of the heart alone, without any word at all, is more acceptable

to Him of one in such case, than long service so said, so folk use to say it in health. The martyrs in their agony made no long prayers aloud, but one inch of such a prayer so prayed in that pain was worth a whole ell and more, even of their own prayers prayed at some other time.

iii

AGAIN, comfort under tribulation far exceedeth that in prosperity. First, as I before have at length shewed you, out of all question continual wealth interrupted with no tribulation is a very discomfortable token of everlasting damnation. Whereupon it followeth, that tribulation is one cause of comfort unto a man's heart, in that it dischargeth him from this peril. Another is, that the Scripture much commendeth tribulation, as occasion of more profit than wealth and prosperity, not to them only that are therein, but to them too that resort unto them. And verily when worldly mirth seem to be commanded in Scripture, it is either commonly spoken, as in the person of some worldly disposed people, or understanden of rejoicing spiritual, or meant of some small moderate refreshing of the mind, against an heavy discomfortable dulness. Now whereas prosperity was to

the children of Israel promised in the old law as a special gift of God : that was for their imperfection at that time, to draw them to God with gay things and pleasant, as men to make children learn give them cake-bread and butter. For, as the Scripture maketh mention, that people were much after the manner of children in lack of wit, and in waywardness. And therefore was their master Moses called *Pædagogus*,* that is, a teacher of children ; or (as they call such a one in the grammar-schools), an usher or a master of the petits. For, as St. Paul saith : *Nihil ad perfectum duxit lex*—The old law brought nothing to perfection.† And God also threateneth folk with tribulation in this world for sin, not because worldly tribulation is evil, but to help us from sin, for fear of the thing to follow : which though it be indeed a very good wholesome thing, if we will take it, is yet because it is painful the thing that we be lothe to have. Tribulation meriteth in patience, and in the obedient conforming of the man's will unto God, and in thanks given to God for His visitation.

* Galat. iii, 24. † Heb. vii.

Chapter XVIII

THE PROFITS OF TRIBULATION

i

TO sum up what I have said, comfort in tribulation can be secured only on the sure ground of faith holding as true the words of Scripture and the teaching of the Catholic Church. With this conviction we shall consider tribulation as a gracious gift of God, bestowed on His special friends and highly praised in Scripture. The contrary, where long continued, is perilous. If God send it not, man must by penance put it on himself—a purgation from sins past and a preservative from future sins otherwise inevitable—a thing detaching us from the world, drawing us towards God—diminishing our purgatory—increasing our reward in Heaven. The means by which our Saviour entered His Kingdom and the Apostles followed Him thither—to which our Saviour exhorted all men—the one thing necessary to be His disciple and for winning Heaven.

ii

WHOSO these things thinketh on and remembereth well, shall in his tribulation neither murmur nor grudge; but first by patience take his pain in worth, and then shall he grow in goodness and think himself well worthy. Then shall he consider that God sendeth it for his weal, and thereby shall he be moved to give God thank therefor. Therewith shall his grace increase, and God shall give him such comfort, by considering that God is in his trouble evermore near unto him (*Quia Deus juxta est iis qui tribulato sunt corde*—God is near, saith the prophet, to those that have their heart in trouble):* that his joy thereof shall minish much of his pain, and he shall not seek for vain comfort elsewhere, but specially trust in God, and seek for help of Him, submitting his own will wholly to God's pleasure, and pray to God in his heart, and pray his friends pray for him, and specially the priests, as St. James biddeth,† and begin first with confession, and make us clean to God and ready to depart, and be glad to go to God, putting purgatory to His pleasure.

* Psalm xxxiv. † Jacobi x.

iii

IF we thus do, this dare I boldly say, we shall never live here the less of half an hour, but shall with this comfort find our hearts lighted, and thereby the grief of our tribulation lessed, and the more likelihood to recover and to live the longer. Now if God will we shall hence, then doth He much more for us. For he that this way taketh, cannot go but well. For of him that is loth to leave this wretched world, my heart is much in fear lest he die not well. Hard it is for him to be welcome that cometh against his will, that saith to God when He cometh to him, Welcome my maker, maugre my teeth. But he that so loveth Him that he longeth to go to Him, my heart cannot give me but he shall be welcome, all were it so, that he should come ere he were well purged. For charity covereth a multitude of sins, and he that trusteth in God cannot be confounded. And Christ saith, He that cometh to Me, I will not cast him out.* And therefore let us never make our reckoning of long life ; keep it while we may, because God hath so commanded. But if God give the occasion that with His good will we may go, let us be glad thereof, and long to go to Him. And then shall hope of Heaven

* Prov. x. [and Proverb. iv]. Johan. vi.

comfort our heaviness, and out of our transitory tribulation shall we go to everlasting glory, to which, my good cousin, I pray God bring us both.

Chapter XIX

RECREATION AND COMFORT

i

AS to whether men in tribulation may not lawfully seek recreation, and comfort themself with some honest mirth: first, agree that our chief comfort must be in God, and that with Him we must begin, and with Him continue, and with Him end also: a man to take now and then some honest worldly mirth, I dare not be so sore as utterly to forbid it, sith good men and well-learned have in some cases allowed it, specially for the diversity of divers men's minds. For else, if we were all such, as would God we were! and such as natural wisdom would we should be, and is not all clean excusable that we be not in deed: I would then put no doubt, but that unto any man the most comfortable talking that could be were to hear of Heaven; whereas now, God help us! our wretchedness is such, that in talking a while thereof, men wax almost weary, and as

though to hear of Heaven were an heavy burden, they must refresh themself after with a foolish tale. Our affection toward heavenly joys waxeth wonderful cold. If dread of hell were as far gone, very few would fear God: but that yet a little sticketh in our stomachs. Mark me, cousin, at the sermon, and commonly towards the end, somewhat the preacher speaketh of hell and Heaven. Now, while he preacheth of the pains of hell, still they stand yet and give him the hearing; but as soon as he cometh to the joys of Heaven, they be busking them backward and flock-meal fall away. It is in the soul somewhat as it is in the body. Some are there of stature, or of evil custom, come to that point, that a worse thing sometime steadeth them more than a better. Some man, if he be sick, can away with no wholesome meat, nor no medicine can go down with him, but if it be tempered with some such thing for his fantasy, as maketh the meat or the medicine less wholesome than it should be. And yet while it will be no better, we must let him have it so.

ii

CASSIANUS, that very virtuous man, rehearseth in a certain collection of his,* that a certain holy father, in making of a sermon, spake of Heaven and heavenly things so celestially that much of his audience with the sweet sound thereof began to forget all the world, and fall asleep. Which, when the father beheld, he dissembled their sleeping, and suddenly said unto them, I shall tell you a merry tale. At which word, they lifted up their heads and harkened unto that. And after the sleep therewith broken, heard him tell on of Heaven again. In what wise that good father rebuked them their untoward minds, so dull unto the thing that all our life we labour for, and so quick and lusty toward other trifles, I neither bear in mind, nor shall here need to rehearse. But thus much of the matter sufficeth for our purpose, that whereas you demand me whether in tribulation men may not sometime refresh themself with worldly mirth and recreation ; I can no more say, but he that cannot long endure to hold up his head and hear talking of Heaven, except he be now and then between (as though to hear of Heaven were heaviness) refreshed with a merry foolish tale, there

* Lib. v. cap. 31.

is none other remedy, but you must let him have it. Better would I wish it, but I cannot help it.

iii

HOWBEIT, let us by mine advice at the leastwise make those kinds of recreation as short and as seld as we can. Let them serve us but for sauce, and make them not our meat: and let us pray unto God, and all our good friends for us, that we may feel such a savour in the delight of Heaven, that in respect of the talking of the joys thereof, all worldly recreation be but a grief to think on. And be sure, cousin, that if we might once purchase the grace to come to that point, we never found of worldly recreation so much comfort in a year as we should find in the bethinking us of Heaven in less than half an hour.

Chapter XX

THE SNUFF OF A CANDLE

i

I CANNOT liken my life more meetly now than to the snuff of a candle that burneth within the candlestick's nose. For as the snuff sometime burneth down so low, that whoso looketh on it would ween it were quite out, and yet suddenly lifteth a flame half an inch above the nose and giveth a pretty short light again, and thus playeth divers times, till at last ere it be looked for out it goeth altogether : so have I, cousin, divers such days together, as every day of them I look even for to die : and yet have I then after that time such few days again, as you see me now to have yourself, in which a man would ween that I might yet well continue. But I know my lingering not likely to last long, but out will my snuff suddenly some day within a while, and therefore will I with God's help, seem I never so well amended, nevertheless reckon every day for my last. For though that to the

repressing of the bold courage of blind youth, there is a very true proverb that as soon cometh a young sheep's skin to the market as an old ; yet this difference there is at least between them, that as the young man may hap sometime to die soon, so the old man can never live long. And therefore, cousin, in one matter here, leaving out many things that I would else treat of, I shall for this time speak but of very few. Howbeit, if God hereafter send me moe such days then will we, when you list, farther talk of moe.

Chapter XXI

SAD AND GLAD

i

THE first kind also will I shortly pass over too. For the tribulation that a man willingly taketh himself, which no man putteth upon him against his own will, is (you wot well) as I somewhat touched the last day, such affliction of the flesh, or expense of his goods, as a man taketh himself, or willingly bestoweth in punishment of his own sin and for devotion to God. Now in this tribulation needeth he no man to comfort him. For while no man troubleth him but himself, which feeleth him far forth he may conveniently bear, and of reason and good discretion shall not pass that, wherein if any doubt arise, counsel needeth, and not comfort ; the courage that for God's sake and his soul's health kindleth his heart and enflameth it thereto, shall by the same grace that put it in his mind, give him such comfort and joy therein that the pleasure of his soul shall pass the

pain of his body: yea, and while he hath in heart also some great heaviness for his sin, yet when he considereth the joy that shall come of it, his soul shall not fail to feel then that strange case, which my body felt once in a great fever. Even in this same bed (it is now more than fifteen years ago) I lay in a tertian, and had passed, I trow, three or four fits: but after fell there one fit on me out of course, so strange and so marvellous, that I would in good faith have thought it impossible. For I suddenly felt myself verily both hot and cold throughout all my body, hot in some part the one, and in some part the other, for that had been, you wot well, no very strange thing to feel the head hot while the hands were cold; but the self-same parts, I say, so God my soul save! I sensibly felt, and right painfully too, all in one instant both hot and cold at once.

ii

LIKEWISE then I say, as myself felt my body then both hot and cold at once; so he that is contrite and heavy for his sin, shall have cause for to be, and shall indeed be, both sad and glad and both twain at once, and shall do as I remember holy St. Hierome biddeth: *Et doleas, et de dolore gaudeas*. Both be thou

sorry, saith he, and be thou of thy sorrow joyful also.

And thus, as I began to say, of comfort to be given unto him that is in this tribulation, that is to wit, in fruitful heaviness and penance for his sin, shall we none need to give other than only to remember and consider well the goodness of God's excellent mercy, that infinitely passeth the malice of all men's sin, by which He is ready to receive every man, and did spread His arms abroad upon the cross lovingly to embrace all them that will come, and even there accepted the thief at his last end that turned not to God till he might steal no longer, and yet maketh more feast in Heaven at one that from sin turneth than of ninety and nine good men that sinned not at all.* And therefore of that first kind will I make no longer tale.

* Luc. xv.

Chapter XXII

HOW TO GET CONTRITION

i

MANY there are, you say, who though they would feel sorrow for sins, cannot do so, and on the contrary are even made merry by their remembrance, and such men must stand in a very perilous case. This is indeed so, and the old Saints wrote very sore on this point. Howbeit, *Misericordia Domini super omnia opera ejus*—The mercy of God is above all His works,* and He standeth bound to no common rule. *Et ipse cognovit figmentum suum, et propitiatur infirmitatibus nostris*—And He knoweth the frailty of this earthen vessel that is of His own making, and is merciful, and hath pity and compassion upon our feeble infirmities,† and shall not exact of us above that thing that we may do. But yet, cousin, he that findeth himself in that case, in that he is minded to do well hereafter, let him give God thanks that he is no worse,

* Psalm cxliv. † Psalm cii.

but in that he cannot be sorry for his sin past, let him be sorry hardly that he is no better. And as St. Hierome biddeth him that for his sin sorroweth in his heart, be glad and rejoice in his sorrow: so would I counsel him that cannot be sad for his sin, to be sorry yet at the least that he cannot be sorry.

ii

BESIDES this, though I would in no wise any man should despair, yet would I counsel such a man, while that affection lasteth, not to be too bold of courage, but live in double fear. First, for it is a token either of faint faith, or of a dull diligence. For surely if we believe in God, and therewith deeply consider His High Majesty with the peril of our sin, and the great goodness of God also: either should dread make us tremble and break our stony heart, or love should for sorrow relent it into tears. Besides this, I can scant believe, but sith so little misliking of our old sin is an affection not very pure and clean, and none unclean thing shall enter into heaven; cleansed shall it be and purified, before that we come thither. And, therefore, would I farther advise one in that case, the counsel which M. Gerson giveth every man, that sith the

body and the soul together make the whole man, the less affliction that he feeleth in his soul, the more pain in recompense let him put upon his body, and purge the spirit by the affliction of the flesh. And he that so doth, I dare lay my life, shall have his hard heart after relent into tears, and his soul in an wholesome heaviness and heavenly gladness too, specially if, which must be joined with every good thing, he join faithful prayer therewith.

iii

WITH those new teachers who reject as valueless all works of penance I shall not as I told you dispute. But surely for mine own part I cannot well hold with them. For, as far as mine own poor wit can perceive, the Holy Scripture of God is very plain against them, and the whole corps of Christendom in every Christian region, and the very places in which they dwell themselves, have ever unto their own days clearly believed against them, and all the old holy doctors have evermore taught against them, and all the old holy interpreters have construed the Scripture against them. And, therefore, if these men have now perceived so late, that the Scripture hath been misunderstanden all

this while, and that of all those holy doctors no man could understand it; then am I too old at this age to begin to study it now. And trust these men's cunning, cousin, that dare I not, in nowise, sith I cannot see nor perceive no cause, wherefore I should think, that these men might not now in the understanding of Scripture, as well be deceived themself, as they bear us in hand, that all those other have been all this while before.

iv

HOWBEIT, cousin, if so it be, that their way be not wrong, but that they have found out so easy a way to Heaven as to take no thought, but make merry, nor take no penance at all, but sit them down and drink well for our Saviour's sake, sit cock-a-hoop and fill in all the cups at once, and then let Christ's passion pay for all the shot. I am not he that will envy their good hap, but surely counsel dare I give no man, to adventure that way with them. But such as fear lest that way be not sure, and take upon them willingly tribulation of penance, what comfort they do take and well may take therein, that I have somewhat told you already. And sith these other folk sit so

merry without such tribulation, we need to talk to them, you wot well, of no such manner comfort. And therefore of this kind of tribulation will I make an end.

Chapter XXIII

QUI HABITAT (Ps. xc).

i

THE prophet expresseth a plain comfortable promise of God against all temptation, where he saith: *Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi, in protectione Dei cæli commorabitur*—Whoso dwelleth in the help of the highest God, he shall abide in the protection or defence of the God of Heaven.* Who dwelleth now, good cousin, in the help of the High God? Surely he that through a good faith abideth in the trust and confidence of God's help, and neither for lack of that faith and trust in His help falleth desperate of all help, nor departeth from the hope of His help to seek himself help of the flesh, the world, or the devil. For unto such a faithful well-hoping man the prophet in the same psalm saith farther: *Scapulis suis obumbrabit tibi, et sub pennis ejus sperabis*—With His shoulders shall he shadow thee, and under His feathers shalt

* Psalm xc.

thou trust.* Lo, here hath every faithful man a sure promise, that in the fervent heat of temptation or tribulation, for (as I have said divers times before) they be in such wise coincident, that every tribulation the devil useth for temptation to bring us to impatience, and thereby to murmur, grudge, and blaspheme, and every kind of temptation is to a good man that fighteth against it, and will not follow it, a very painful tribulation. In the fervent heat, I say therefore, of every temptation, God giveth the faithful man (that hopeth in Him) the shadow of His holy shoulders, which are broad and large, sufficient to refrigerate and refresh the man in that heat, and in every tribulation He putteth His shoulders for a defence between. And then that weapon of the devil may give us any deadly wound, while that impenetrable pavice of the shoulder of God standeth alway between.

ii

THEN goeth the verse farther, and saith unto such a faithful man, *et sub pennis ejus sperabis*—thy hope shall be under His feathers; that is, to wit, for the good hope thou hast in His help, He

* Psalm xc.

will take thee so near Him into His protection, that as the hen, to keep her young chickens from the kite, nestleth them together under her own wings: so fro the devil's claws, the ravenous kite of this dark air, the God of Heaven will gather His faithful trusting folk near unto His own sides, and set them in surety very well and warm under the covering of His own heavenly wings. And of this defence and protection our Saviour spake Himself unto the Jews (as mention is made in the Gospel of St. Matthew), to whom He said in this wise: *Hierusalem, Hierusalem, quæ occidis prophetas, et lapidas eos qui ad te missi sunt, quoties volui congregare te sicut gallina congregat pullos suos sub alas, et noluisti?* That is to say—Hierusalem, Hierusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest to death them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee together, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not?*

iii

HERE are words of no little comfort unto every Christian man: by which we may see, with how tender affection God of His great goodness longeth

* Matth. xxiii.

to gather under the protection of His wings, and how often like a loving hen he clocketh home unto Him even those chickens of His that wilfully walk abroad in the kite's danger, and will not come at His clocking, but ever the more He clocketh for them, the farther they go from Him. And, therefore, can we not doubt, if we will follow Him, and with faithful hope come run unto Him, but that He shall in all matter of temptation take us near unto Him, and set us even under His wings, and then are we safe, if we will tarry there. For against our will can there no power pull us thence, nor hurt our souls there. *Pone me* (saith the prophet) *juxta te, et cujusvis manus pugnet contra me*—Set me near unto thee, and fight against me whose hand that will.* And to shew the great safeguard and surety that we shall have, while we sit under His Heavenly feathers, the prophet saith yet a great deal farther: *In velamento alarum tuarum exultatio*, that is, to wit, that we shall not only (when we sit by His sweet side under His holy wing) sit in safeguard, but that we shall also under the covering of His Heavenly wings, with great exultation rejoice.†

* Job xvii. † Psalm xxi.

Chapter XXIV

THE NIGHT'S FEAR

i

FIRST he saith: *Non timebisa timore nocturno*—Thou shalt not be afraid of the fear of the night. By the night is there in Scripture some time understood tribulation, as appeareth in the thirty-fourth chapter of Job: *Novit enim Deus opera eorum, idcirco inducet noctem*—God hath known the works of them, and therefore shall He bring night upon them, that is, to wit, tribulation for their wickedness.* And well you wot, that the night is of the nature of itself very discomfortable and full of fear. And therefore by the night's fear, here I understand that tribulation by which the devil, through the sufferance of God either by himself, or other that are his instruments, tempteth good folk to impatience, as he did Job. But he that, as the prophet saith, dwellest and continueth faithfully in the hope of God's help shall so be clipped in on every side with the shield or pavice of God, that

* Job xxxiv.

he shall have no need to be afeared of such tribulation that is here called the night's fear.

And it may be also conveniently called the night's fear for two causes. The one, for that many times the cause of his tribulation is unto him that suffereth it dark and unknown ; and therein varieth it and differeth from that tribulation by which the devil tempteth a man with open fight and assault for a known good thing, from which he would withdraw him, or for some known evil thing, into which he would drive him by force of such persecution. Another cause, for which it is called the night's fear, may be for that the night is so far out of courage, and naturally so casteth folk in fear, that of every thing whereof they perceive any manner dread, their phantasy doubleth their fear, and maketh them often ween that it were much worse than indeed it is. The prophet saith in the Psalter : *Posuisti tenebras et facta est nox, in ipsa pertransibunt omnes bestiæ sylvæ. Catuli leonum rugientes quærentes a Deo escam sibi*—Thou hast, good Lord, set the darkness, and made was the night, and in the night walk all the beasts of the wood. The whelps of the lions roaring and calling unto God for their meat.*

* Psalm ciii.

Now, though that the lions' whelps walk about roaring in the night and seek for their prey, yet can they not get such meat as they would alway, but must hold themself content with such as God suffereth to fall in their way. And though they be not aware thereof, yet of God they ask it, and of Him they have it.

ii

AND this may be comfort to all good men in their night's fear, in their dark tribulation, that though they fall into the claws or the teeth of those lions' whelps, yet shall all that they can do not pass beyond the body, which is but as the garment of the soul. For the soul itself, which is the substance of the man, is so surely fenced in round about with the shield or pavice of God, that as long as he will abide faithfully *in adjutorio Altissimi* (in the hope of God's help), the lions' whelps shall not be able to hurt it. For the great lion himself could never be suffered to go farther in the tribulation of Job* than God from time to time gave him leave. And therefore the deep darkness of the midnight maketh men that stand out of faith and out of good hope in God to be in their tribulation far in the greater

* Job i.

fear, for lack of the light of faith, whereby they might perceive that the uttermost of their peril is a far less thing than they take it for. But we be so wont to set so much by our body which we see and feel and in the feeding and fostering whereof we set our delight and our wealth, and so little alas! and so seld we think on our soul, because we cannot see that but by spiritual understanding, and most specially by the eye of our faith (in the meditation whereof we bestow, God wot, little time), that the loss of our body we take for a sorer thing and for a greater tribulation a great deal than we do the loss of our soul.

iii

AND whereas our Saviour biddeth us,* that we should not fear these lions' whelps that can but kill our bodies, and when that is done, have no farther thing in their power wherewith they can do us harm, but biddeth us stand in dread of Him, which when he hath slain the body, is able then beside to cast the soul into everlasting fire; we be so blind in the dark night of tribulation, for the lack of full and fast belief of God's word, that whereas in the day of prosperity we very

* Matth. x.

little fear God for our soul, our night's fear of adversity maketh us very sore to fear the lion and his whelps, for dread of loss of our bodies. And whereas St. Paul in sundry places sheweth us that our body is but as the garment of the soul, yet the faintness of our faith to the Scripture of God maketh us with the night's fear of tribulation more to dread, not only the loss of our body than of our soul: that is, to wit, of the clothing, than of the substance that is closed therewith: but also of the very outward goods that serve for the clothing of the body. And much more foolish are we in that dark night's fear, than were he that could forget the saving of his body, for fear of losing his old rain-beaten cloak, that is but the covering of his gown or his coat.

Now consider farther yet, that the prophet in the fore-remembered verses saith not, that in the night walk only the lions' whelps, but also, *omnes bestiæ sylvae*—all the beasts of the wood. Now wot you well, that if a man walk through the wood in the night, many things may make him afraid, which in the day he would not be afraid a whit, for in the night every bush to him that waxeth once afraid, seemeth a thief. Howbeit, as the prophet saith: He that faithfully dwelleth in the hope of God's help, the pavice of

His truth shall so fence him in round about, that be it an ass colt, or a lion's whelp, a rock of stone, or a mist, *non timebit a timore nocturno*—the night's fear thereof shall be nothing dread to fear at all.

Chapter XXV

PUSILLANIMITY

i

IN this night's fear one great part thereof is the fault of Pusillanimity, that is, to wit, feeble and faint stomach, by which a man for faint heart is afraid where he needeth not ; by reason whereof he fleeth oftentimes for fear of that thing of which if he fled not, he should take no harm : and some man doth sometime by his fleeing make his enemy bold on him which would (if he fled not, but durst abide thereby) give over and flee from him. This fault of pusillanimity maketh a man in his tribulation for feeble heart first impatient, and afterward oftentimes driveth him by impatience into a contrary affection, making him forwardly stubborn and angry against God, and thereby to fall into blasphemy, as do the damned souls in hell. This fault of pusillanimity and timorous mind letteth a man also many times from the doing of many good things, which (if he took a good

stomach to him in the trust of God's help) he were well able to do: but the devil casteth him in a cowardice, and maketh him take it for humility, to think himself innocent and unable thereto, and therefore to leave the good thing undone, whereof God offereth him occasion, and had made him meet and convenient thereto.

ii

THIS pusillanimity bringeth forth by the night's fear, a very timorous daughter, a seely wretched girl, and ever puling, that is called Scrupulosity, or a scrupulous conscience: the scrupulous person, which frameth himself many times double the fear that he hath cause, and many times a great fear where there is no cause at all, and of that which is indeed no sin, maketh a venial, and that that is venial, imagineth to be deadly. And yet for all that falleth in them, being namely such of their own nature as no man long liveth without, and then he feareth that he be never full confessed, nor never full contrite, and then that his sins be never full forgiven him; and then he confesseth, and confesseth again, and cumbereth himself and his confessor both; and then every prayer that he saith, though he say

it as well as the frail infirmity of the man will suffice, yet he is not satisfied, but if he say it again, and yet after that again. And when he hath said one thing thrice, as little is he satisfied with the last, as with the first ; and then is his heart evermore in heaviness, unquiet, and in fear, full of doubt and dulness, without comfort or spiritual consolation. Yea, and farther, the devil longeth to make all his good works and spiritual exercise so painful and so tedious unto him, that with some other subtle suggestion or false wily doctrine of a false spiritual liberty, he should for the false ease and pleasure that he should suddenly find therein, be easily conveyed from that evil fault into a much worse, and have his conscience as wide and as large after, as ever it was narrow and strait before.

iii

ONE so troubled should act as a physician doth when he is ill. However cunning he may be he never treats himself in his own case, but submits himself to his fellows. And so let the scrupulous person forbear for a while the judgement of himself, and follow the counsel of some other, whom he knoweth for well learned and virtuous, and specially in the place

of confession (for there is God specially present with His Grace, assisting His holy Sacrament), and let him not doubt to acquiet his mind, and follow that he there is bidden, and think for a while less of the fear of God's justice, and be more merry in the remembrance of His mercy, and persevere in prayer for grace, and abide and dwell faithfully in the sure hope of His help. And then shall he find without any doubt, that the pavice of God's truth shall, as the prophet saith, so compass him about, that he shall not need to dread this night's fear of scrupulosity, but shall have afterwards his conscience established in good quiet and rest.

Chapter XXVI

SUICIDE

i

ANOTHER daughter of pusillanimity is that most horrible temptation to self-destruction. Yet many a good man and many a good woman have for years been tempted thereto, but by grace and good counsel have victoriously withstood it. It may come from pride, anger, spiritual delusion. Cassian* tells of a monk apparently of great sanctity who secretly proud believed he had revelations from God, and was thus persuaded by the devil to kill himself, and so go straight to God. By some this act has been applauded as a sign of courage, as for example in the case of Cato, who killed himself after Cæsar's victory in Africa. But St. Austin well declareth† that there was no strength or magnanimity therein but plain pusillanimity and impotency of stomach, whereby he was forced to destroy himself because

* Collat. ii, cap 5.
† *De Civit. Dei*, cap 22 et 23.

he could not bear to see another man's glory, or the suffering of calamities which might fall upon himself.

ii

IN defence of self-destruction God is quoted as having commanded Abraham to kill his son, and as having inspired Samson to kill himself with pulling down the house on his own head at the feast of the Philistine. But God never intended Isaac to be slain, but only to try the obedience of Abraham. As regards Samson his salvation is not sure. In his favour may be urged that the Philistines were enemies of God and were using Samson as their mocking-stool in scorn of God. Thus it is likely that God inspired Samson to sacrifice himself in vengeance on these blasphemers. Moreover, his strength was specially bestowed on him to accomplish the deed. *Irruit virtus Domini in Samsonem*—The power of the might of God rushed into Samson.* St. Austin also says that those virgins who committed suicide rather than be violated by the infidels could have only done so by Divine inspiration, if that act is to be justified, for God's precept against self-destruction is so plain and binding.

* Judges xv.

iii

A COMMON tale goeth how a carver's wife helped her husband in a frantic phantasy. He told her that he must kill himself on Good Friday as Christ was killed for him. The wife seeing that he was beyond reason, urged that Christ did not kill Himself, but was killed by others, and that she would secretly crucify him on a large cross which he had prepared for a new crucifix, but to follow Christ's passion, she urged that he must be first scourged and after crowned with thorns. To this he gladly consented. Whereupon she bound him fast to a post and left not beating, exhorting him the while to suffer patiently till she prayed that she might put on him the crown of thorns which she had prepared. He said, however, that he thought this was enough for this year, and would pray God to forbear the remnant till Good Friday came again. But when it came again the next year then was his desire past, he longed to follow Christ no further.

Chapter XXVII

HOW TO FIGHT SUICIDAL TEMPTATION

i

THE manner of the fight against this temptation must stand in three things: that is, to wit, in resisting and in contemning, and in the invocation of help. Resist must a man for his own part by reason, considering what a folly it were to fall where he needeth not, while he is not driven to it in avoiding any other pain, or in the hope of winning any manner of pleasure: but contrariwise should by that pain lose everlasting bliss and fall into everlasting pain: and if it were in avoiding of other great pain, yet could he void none so great thereby, as he should thereby fall into. He must also consider, that a great part of this temptation is in effect but the fear of his own phantasy, the dread that he hath lest he shall once be driven to it. Which thing he may be sure, that, but if himself will of his own folly, all the devils in hell can never drive

him to, but his own foolish imagination may. For like as some man going over an high bridge, waxeth so afraid through his own phantasy, that he falleth down indeed, although, in fact, he could safely pass over. Or again, if folk called out to him, " you fall, you fall," he would do so from the mere suggestion, whereas if they assured him there was no danger, he would run over without let as if it were not a foot from the ground. So dareth it in this temptation. The devil findeth the man of his own fond phantasy afraid, and then crieth he in the ear of his heart, " Thou fallest, thou fallest," and maketh the fond man afraid, that he should at every foot fall indeed. And the devil so wearieth him with that continual fear (if he give the ear of his heart unto him), that at the last he draweth his mind from the due remembrance of God, and then driveth him to that deadly mischief indeed.

ii

THEREFORE, like as against the vice of the flesh, the victory standeth not all whole in the fight, but sometime also in the flight (saving that it is indeed the part of a wise warrior's fight to flee away from his enemies' trains), so must a man in this temptation too, not only resist

it alway with reasoning there against, but sometime set it clean at right nought, and cast it off when it cometh, and not once regard it, nor so much as vouchsafe to think thereon. Some folk have been clearly rid of such pestilent phantasies with very full contempt thereof, making a cross upon their hearts and bidding the devil avaunt, and sometime laugh him to scorn too, and then turn their mind unto some other matter. And when the devil hath seen that they have set so little by him, after many essays, made in such times as he thought most meet, he hath given that temptation quite over, both for that the proud spirit cannot endure to be mocked, and also lest with much tempting the man to the same, whereunto he could not in conclusion bring him, he should much thereby increase his merit.

iii

THE final fight is by invocation of God both by praying for himself, and desiring others also to pray for him, both poor folk for his alms, and other good folk for their charity, specially good priests in the holy sacred service of the Mass, and not only them, but also his own good angel, and other holy Saints, such as his devotion standeth specially unto.

And if he be learned, let him use the Litany with the holy suffrages that follow, which is a prayer in the church of marvellous old antiquity. Unto God Himself every man counselleth to have recourse above all, and in this temptation to have special remembrance of Christ's passion, and pray Him for the honour of His death, the ground of man's salvation, to keep the person thus tempted from that damnable death. Special verses may there be drawn out of the Psalter against the devil's wicked temptations, as for example: *Exurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimici ejus, et fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie ejus* *—And many others, which are in such horrible temptation to God most pleasant, and to the devil very terrible—but none more terrible, nor none more odious to the devil, than the words with which our Saviour drove him away himself—*Vade Sathana* †—nor no prayer more acceptable unto God, nor more effectual for the matter, than those words which our Saviour hath taught Himself, *Ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo.*‡ And I doubt not, by God's grace, but he that is such a temptation will use good counsel and prayer, and keep himself in good virtuous business and good virtuous company, and abide in the

* Psalm lxvii. † Matth. iv. ‡ Matth. vi.

faithful hope of God's help, shall have the truth of God so compass him about with a pavice that he shall not need to dread this night's fear of this wicked temptation.

Chapter XXVIII

THE ARROW FLYING BY DAY

i

IN these words of the prophet: *Scuto circumdabit te veritas ejus, a sagitta volante in die*—The truth of God shall compass thee round about with a pavice, from the arrow flying in the day * —I understand the arrow of pride, with which the devil tempteth a man, not in the night, that is to wit, in tribulation and adversity (for that time is too discomfortable and too fearful for pride), but in the day, that is, to wit, in prosperity; for that time is lightsome, lusty, and full of courage.

But surely this worldly prosperity, wherein a man so rejoiceth, and whereof the devil maketh him so proud, is but even a very short winter day. For we begin many full poor and cold, and up we fly like an arrow that we shot up into the air; and yet when we be suddenly shot up into the highest, ere we be well

* Psalm xc.

warm there, down we come unto the cold ground again, and then even there stick we still. And yet for the short while that we be upward and aloft: Lord! how lusty and how proud we be, buzzing above busily like as a bumble bee flieth about in summer, never ware that he shall die in winter: and so fare many of us, God help us! For in the short winter day of worldly wealth and prosperity, this flying arrow of the devil, this high spirit of pride, shot out of the devil's bow and piercing through our heart, beareth us up in our affection aloft into the clouds, where we ween we sit upon the rainbow and overlook all the world under us, accounting in the regard of our own glory such other poor souls, as were peradventure wont to be our fellows, for silly poor pigmies and ants. But this arrow of pride, fly it never so high into the clouds, and be the man that it carrieth up so high, never so joyful thereof: yet let him remember, that be this arrow never so light, it hath yet an heavy iron head. And therefore fly it never so high, down must it needs come at last, and on the ground must it light, and falleth sometime not in a very cleanly place: and then the pride turneth into rebuke and shame, so that there is then all the glory gone.

ii

OF this arrow speaketh the wise man in the fifth chapter of Sapience, where he saith in the person of them that in pride and vanity passed the time of this present life, and after that so spent, passed hence into hell: "What hath pride profited us or what good hath the glory of our riches done us? Passed are all these things like a shadow, etc., or like an arrow shot out into the place appointed: the air that was divided is by-and-by returned into the place, and in such wise closed up again, that the way is not perceived in which the arrow went: and in likewise we, as soon as we were born, be by-and-by vanished away, and have left no token of any good virtue behind us, but are consumed, and wasted, and come to nought in our own malignity. They, lo, that have lived here in sin, such words have they spoken when they lay in hell."* But now must you consider that though prosperity be contrary to tribulation, yet unto many a good man the devil's temptation unto pride in prosperity is a greater tribulation, and more need hath of good counsel and good comfort both, than he, that never felt it, would ween. And that is the thing, cousin, that maketh me

* Sap. v.

speak thereof, as of a thing proper to this matter. For, cousin, as it is a thing right hard to touch pitch * and never file the fingers, to put flax unto fire and yet keep it from burning, to keep a serpent in thy bosom and yet be safe from stinging, to put young men with young women without danger of foul fleshly desires : so is it hard for any person, either man or woman, in great worldly wealth and much prosperity, so to withstand the temptations of the devil, and the occasions given by the world, that they should keep themself from the deadly desire of ambitious glory. Whereupon there followeth, if a man fall thereto, an whole flood of all unhappy mischief, arrogant manner, high sullen solemn port, overlooking the poor in word and countenance, displeasant and disdainous behaviour, ravine, extortion, oppression, hatred, and cruelty.

iii

IF here were two men that were beggars both, and afterward a great rich man would take the one unto him, and tell him that for a little time he would have him in his house, and thereupon arrayed him in silk, and gave him a great bag by his side filled even full of gold, but giving

* Eccles. viii.

him this knot therewith, that within a little while, out he should in his old rags again, and bear never a penny with him. If this beggar met his fellow now, while his gay gown were on, might he not for all his gay gear take him for his fellow still? And were he not a very fool, if for a wealth of a few weeks he would ween himself far his better? Surely, methinketh that in this world between the richest and the most poor the difference is scant so much. For let the highest look on the most base, and consider how poor they came both into this world, and then consider farther therewith how rich soever he be now, he shall yet within a while, peradventure less than one week, walk out again as poor as that beggar shall; and then, by my troth, me thinketh this rich man much more than mad, if for the wealth of a little while, haply less than one week, he reckon himself in earnest any better than the beggar's fellow. And less than this can no man think that hath any natural wit, and will use it.

But now a Christian man, cousin, that hath the light of faith, cannot fail to think in this thing much farther. For he will think not only upon his bare coming hither, and his bare going hence again, but also upon the dreadful judgement of God, and upon the fearful pains of hell,

and the inestimable joys of Heaven. And in the considering of these things he will call to remembrance, that peradventure when this beggar and he be both departed hence, the beggar may be suddenly set up in such royalty, that well were himself that ever he was born, if he might be made his fellow. And he that well bethinketh him, cousin, upon these things, I verily think that the arrow of pride flying forth in the day of worldly wealth shall never so wound his heart that ever it shall bear him up one foot.

Chapter XXIX

NEGOTIUM. BUSINESS WALKING ABOUT IN THE DARKNESS

1

THE prophet saith in the said psalm, *Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi, in protectione Dei cæli commorabitur. Scuto circumdabit te veritas ejus, non timebis, etc. A negotio perambulante in tenebris*—He that dwelleth in the faithful hope of God's help, he shall abide in the protection or safeguard of the God of Heaven ; and thou that art such one, shall the truth of Him so compass about with a pavice, that thou shalt not be afraid of the business walking about in the darknesses. *Negotium* is here, cousin, the name of a devil that is ever full of business, in tempting folk to much evil business. His time of tempting is in the darknesses. For you wot well, that beside the very full night, which is the deep dark, there are two times of darknesses. The one, ere the morning wax light ; the other, when the evening waxeth dark. Two times of like

manner darkness are there also in the soul of man : the one, ere the light of grace be well in the heart sprungen up ; the other, when the light of grace out of the soul beginneth to walk fast away.

In these two darknesses this devil, that is called Business, walketh about, and such fond folk as will follow him he carrieth about with him, and setteth them a work with many manner bumbling business. He setteth, I say, some to seek the pleasures of the flesh in eating, drinking, and other filthy delight, and some he setteth about the incessant seeking for these worldly goods : and if such busy folk, whom this devil, called Business (walking about in the darknesses) setteth a work with such business, our Saviour saith in the Gospel, *Qui ambulat in tenebris, nescit quo vadit* —He that walketh in darkness witteth not whither he goeth.* And surely in such case are they : for they neither wot which way they go, nor whither. For verily they walk round about, as it were in a round maze ; when they ween themself at an end of their business, they be but at the beginning. For is not the going about the serving of the flesh a business that hath no end, but evermore from the end cometh to the beginning again ? For go they never so full fed to bed, yet evermore on the

* Johan. xii.

morrow as new be they to be fed again as they were the day before. Thus fareth it by the belly ; thus fareth it by those parts that are beneath the belly. And as for covetise, it fareth like the fire, the more wood that cometh thereto the more fervent and the more greedy it is.

ii

BUT now hath this maze a centre or middle place, into which sometime they be conveyed suddenly when they ween they were not yet far from the brink. The centre or middle place of this maze is hell, and into that place be there busy folk that with this devil of Business walk about this busy maze in the darknesses, suddenly sometime conveyed, nothing ware whither they be going, and even while they ween that they were not far walked from the beginning, and that they had yet a great way to walk about before they should come to the end. But of these fleshly folk walking in this pleasant busy maze, the Scripture declareth the end : *Ducunt in bonis dies suos, et in puncto ad inferna descendunt*—They lead their life in pleasure, and at a pop down they descend into hell.* Of the covetous man saith St. Paul : *Qui volunt divites,*

* Job xxi.

fieri, incidunt in temptationem et in laqueum diaboli, et desideria multa inutilia et nociva, quæ mergunt homines in interitum et perditionem—They that long to be rich do fall into temptation and into the grin of the devil, and into many desires unprofitable and harmful, which drown men unto death and into destruction.* So to the Rich Fool trusting in his full barns and stores of plenty God said: *Stulte, hac nocte tollent a te animam tuam: quæ autem parasti, cujus erunt?*—Fool, this night shall they take thy soul from thee, and then all this good that thou hast gathered, where shall it be?† Here you see that he fell suddenly into the deep centre of this busy maze, so that he was fallen full and whole therein long ere ever he had weened he should have come near thereto.

iii

NOW this wot I very well, that those that are walking about in this busy maze take not their business for any tribulation, and yet are many of them forwearied as sore, and as sore panged and pained therein, their pleasures being so short, so little, and so few, and their displeasures and their griefs so great, so continual, and so many, that it maketh me think upon a

* 1 Tim. vi. † Luc. xii.

good worshipful man, which, when he divers times beheld his wife, what pain she took in straight binding up her hair to make her a fair large forehead, and with straight bracing in her body to make her middle small, both twain to her great pain for the pride of a little foolish praise: he said unto her, "Forsooth, madam, if God give you not hell, He shall do you great wrong. For it must needs be your own of very right: for you buy it very dear, and take very great pain therefor."

They that now lie in hell for their wretched living here, do now perceive their folly in their more pain that they took here for the less pleasure. There confess they now their folly, and cry out, *Lassati sumus in via iniquitatis*—We have been wearied in the way of wickedness.* And yet while they were walking therein, they would not rest themself, but run on still in their weariness, and put themself still unto more pain and more, for that little peevish pleasure, short and soon gone, that they took all that labour and pain for, beside the everlasting pain that followed it for their farther advantage after.

So help me God, and none otherwise but as I verily think, that many a man buyeth hell here with so much pain, that he might have Heaven with less than the

* Sap. v.

one-half. But yet, as I say, while these fleshly and worldly busy folk are walking about in this round busy maze of the devil that is called Business that walketh about in these two times of darkness, their wits are so by the secret enchantment of the devil bewitched, that they mark not the great long miserable weariness and pain that the devil maketh them take and endure about nought, and therefore they take it for no tribulation: so that they need no comfort. And therefore it is not for their sakes that I speak all this, saving that it may serve them for counsel toward the perceiving of their own foolish misery, through the good help of God's Grace beginning to shine upon them again.

Chapter XXX

DANGERS AND DUTIES OF THE RICH

i

FIRST, cousin, he that is a rich man and keepeth all his good, he hath, I think, very good cause to be very fraid indeed. And yet I fear me, that such folk fear it least; for they be very far from the state of good men sith if they keep still all, then are they very far from charity, and do (you wot well) alms either little or none at all. But now is our question, cousin, not in what case the rich man standeth that keepeth all, but whether we should suffer men to stand in a perilous dread and fear for the keeping of any great part. For if that by the keeping still of so much as maketh a rich man still, they stand in the state of damnation; then are the curates bounden plainly to tell them so, according to the commandment of God given unto them all in the person of Ezekiel:* *Si dicente me ad*

* Ezek. xxxiii.

impium, morte morieris, non annunciaveris ei, etc.—If when I say to the wicked man, thou shalt die, thou do not shew it to him, nor speak it unto him, that he may be turned from his wicked way and may live, he shall soothly die in his wickedness, and his blood shall I verily require of thy hand.

ii

BUT, cousin, though God invited men unto the following of Himself in wilful poverty, by the leaving of all together at once for His sake, as the thing whereby with being out of the solicitude of worldly business, and far from the desire of earthly commodities, they may the more speedily get and attain the state of spiritual affection, and the hungry desire and longing for celestial things; yet doth He not command every man so to do upon the peril of damnation. For where He saith,* *Qui non renunciaverit omnibus quæ possidet non potest esse meus discipulus*—He that forsaketh not all that ever he hath, cannot be my disciple, He declareth well by other words of His own in the self-same place a little before, what he meaneth. For there saith he more, *Si quis venit ad me, et non odit patrem suum, et matrem, et*

* Luc. xiv.

uxorem, et filios, et fratres, et sorores, adhuc autem et animam suam, non potest esse meus discipulus—He that cometh to me, and hateth not his father, and his mother and his wife, and his children, and his brethren, and his sisters, yea and his own life too, cannot be my disciple * Here meaneth our Saviour Christ, that none can be his disciple, but if he love Him so far above all his kin, and above his own life too, that for the love of Him, rather than to forsake Him, he shall forsake them all. And so meaneth he by those other words, that whosoever do not so renounce and forsake all that ever he hath in his own heart and affection, that he will rather lose it all, and let it go every whit, than deadly displease God with the reserving of any one part thereof, he cannot be Christ's disciple; sith Christ teacheth us to love God above all thing. And he loveth not God above all thing, that contrary to God's pleasure keepeth any thing that he hath. For that think he sheweth himself to set more by than by God, while he is better content to lose God than it. But, as I said, to give away all, or that no man should be rich or have any substance, that find I no commandment of.

* Luc. xiv.

iii

THERE are, as our Saviour saith, in the house of his Father many mansions,* and happy shall he be that shall have the Grace to dwell even in the lowest. It seemeth verily by the Gospel, that those, which for God's sake patiently suffer penury, shall not only dwell above those in Heaven, that live here in plenty in earth, but also that Heaven in some manner of wise more properly belongeth unto them, and is more specially prepared for them, than it is for the rich, by that, that God in the Gospel counselleth the rich folk to buy in a manner Heaven of them, where he saith unto the rich man, *Facite vobis amicos de Mammona iniquitatis, ut cum defeceritis, recipiant vos in æterna tabernacula*—Make you friends of the wicked riches, that when you fail here they may receive you into everlasting tabernacles.† But now although this be thus, in respect of the riches and the poverty compared together, yet they being good men both, there may be some other virtue beside, wherein the rich man may so peradventure excel, that he may be in Heaven far above the poor man that was here in earth in other virtues far under him, as the proof appeareth clearly in Lazarus and Abraham.‡

* Johan. xiv. †‡Luc. xvi. ‡ *Ibid.*

Chapter XXXI

ZACCHEUS

i

ZACCHEUS, lo, that climbed up into the tree for desire that he had to behold our Saviour, at such time as Christ called aloud unto him, and said, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for this day must I dwell in thy house,"* he was so glad thereof, and so touched inwardly with special Grace to the profit of his soul, that whereas all the people murmured much that Christ would call him and be so familiar with him, as of his own offer to come unto his house, considering that they knew him for the chief of the publicans, that were customers or toll-gatherers of the emperor's duties, all which whole company were among the people sore inflamed of raven, extortion, and bribery, and then Zaccheus, not only the chief of that fellowship, but also grown greatly rich, whereby the people accounted him in their own opinion, for a man very

* Luc. xix.

sinful and nought; he forthwith by the instinct of the Spirit of God, in reproach of all such temeratious bold and blind judgement given upon a man, whose inward mind and sudden change they cannot see, shortly proved them all deceived, and that Our Lord had at those few words outwardly spoken to him, so touched him, that his Grace so wrought in his heart within that whatsoever he was before, he was then unawares unto them all, suddenly waxen good. For he made haste and came down, and gladly received Christ, and said: "Lo, Lord, the one half of my goods here I give unto poor people, and yet over that, if I have in any thing deceived any man, here am I ready to recompense him fourfold as much."

ii

WOULD God, cousin, that every rich Christian man that is reputed right worshipful, yea and (which yet in my mind more is) reckoned for right honest too, would and were able to do the thing that little Zaccheus the same great publican (were he Jew, or were he Paynim) said! that is to wit, with less than half his goods recompense every man whom he has wronged four times as much; yea, yea, cousin, as much for as much, hardly,

and then they that receive it shall be content (I dare promise for them) to let the other thrice as much go, and forgive it, because it was one of the hard points of the old law, whereas Christian men must be full of forgiving, and not use to require and exact their amends to the uttermost.

But now for our purpose here, notwithstanding that he promised not, neither to give away all, not to become a beggar neither, no nor yet to leave of his office neither: which albeit that he had not used before peradventure in every point so pure, as St. John Baptist had taught them the lesson, *Nihil amplius, quam constitutum est vobis, faciatis*—Do no more than is appointed unto you;* yet forasmuch as he might both lawfully use his substance that he minded to reserve, and lawfully might use his office too, in receiving the prince's duty according to Christ's express commandment, *Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari*—Give the emperor those things that are his,†—refusing all extortion and bribery beside, Our Lord well allowing his good purpose, and exacting no farther forth of him concerning his worldly behaviour, answered and said, *Hodie salus facta est huic domui, eo quod et ipse filius sit Abrahæ*—This day

* Luc. iii. † Marc. xii.

is health come to this house, for that he too is the son of Abraham.*

iii

BUT now forget I not, cousin, that in effect thus far you condescend unto me, that a man may be rich, and yet not out of the state of Grace, nor out of God's favour. Howbeit you think, that though it may be so at some time, or in some place, yet at this time, and in this place, or any such other like, wherein be so many poor people, upon whom they be (you think) bounden to bestow their good, they can therefore keep no riches with good conscience. Verily, cousin, if that reason would hold, I ween the world was never such anywhere in which any man might have kept any substance without the danger of damnation. As for since Christ's days to the world's end, we have the witness of his own words, that there hath never lacked poor men, nor never shall. For he said himself, *Pauperes semper habebitis vobiscum, quibus cum vultis, benefacere potestis*—Poor men shall you alway have with you, whom, when you will, you may do good unto.† So that, as I tell you, if your rule should hold, then were there, I ween, no place in no time

* Luc. xix. † Matth. xxvi.; Marc. xiv

since Christ's days hitherto, nor (as I think) in as long before that neither, nor never shall there hereafter, in which there could any man abide rich without the danger of eternal damnation, even for his riches alone, though he demeaned it never so well. But, cousin, men of substance must there needs be; for else shall you have more beggars, pardie, than there be, and no man left able to relieve another. For this think I in my mind a very sure conclusion, that if all the money that is in this country, were to-morrow next brought together out of every man's hand, and laid all upon one heap, and then divided out unto every man alike, it would be on the morrow after worse than it was the day before. For I suppose when it were all equally thus divided among all, the best should be left little better than a beggar almost is now: and yet he that was a beggar before, all that he shall be the richer for that he should thereby receive, shall not make him much above a beggar still, but many one of the rich men, if their riches stood but in moveable substance, shall be safe enough from riches haply for all their life after.

Chapter XXXII

ANTICIPATING TRIALS

i

SOME say that Peter sinned through presumption in declaring that he would rather die than forsake Christ, and so fell. But others of equal authority hold the contrary. Nor can I see that St. Peter, though he promised more than he was able to perform, thereby greatly offended God. His offence was in not carrying out his resolve through trusting to his own strength. But that a man in this time of persecution, though it may never touch him, should have in his heart to die rather than betray Christ, seemeth me no more harm than that a poor beggar should think that if he became possessed of wealth, he would give a large alms for God's sake.

ii

FOR were a man of a contrary mind and determined to deny the faith with his mouth while he kept it in his heart he

would thereby fall into deadly sin, which indeed would not happen if he never put himself the question. But methinketh that a man of such a mind, that were the question put, would make himself that answer, hath the habit of faith so faint and cold that to the better knowledge of himself and of his necessity to pray for more Grace he had need to have the question put him by himself, or some other man. Still I ween that though a man would never put the question to himself, yet in one place or other, where there be company the question shall be so proposed that he cannot but form an answer. He would be like a man trying to sleep, while he heareth one talking to him, he may wink if he will but he cannot sleep, so shall this man be forced whether he will or no, to think one thing or other therein.

iii

FINALLY, when Christ spake so often and so plain of the matter, that every man should upon pain of damnation, openly confess his faith,* if men took him and by dread of death would drive him to the contrary; it seemeth me in a manner implied therein, that we be bound conditionally to have evermore that mind,

* Matth. x; Luc. xii.

actually sometime, and evermore habitually, that if the case so should fall, then (with God's help), so we would. And where they find in the thinking thereon, their hearts agrise, and shrink in the remembrance of the pain that their imagination representeth to the mind, then must they call to mind and remember the great pain and torment that Christ suffered for them, and heartily pray for Grace that if the case should so fall, God should give them strength to stand. And thus with exercise of such meditation, though men should never stand full out of fear of falling, yet must they persevere in good hope, and in full purpose of standing.

And this seemeth me, cousin, so far forth the mind, that every Christian man and woman must needs have, that methinketh that every curate should often counsel all his parishioners, and every man and woman, their servants and their children, even beginning in their tender youth, to know this point, and to think thereon, and little and little from their very childhood to accustom them dulcely and pleasantly in the meditation thereof, whereby the goodness of God shall not fail so to aspire the Grace of his Holy Spirit into their hearts in reward of that virtuous diligence, that through such actual meditation, he shall confirm them in such a

sure habit of spiritual faithful strength, that all the devils in hell with all the wrestling that they can make, shall never be able to wrest it out of their heart.

Chapter XXXIII

DÆMONIUM MERIDIANUM. THE MIDDAY DEVIL

i

THE fourth temptation, cousin, that the prophet speaketh of in the foreremembered psalm, *Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi*, etc., is plain open persecution, which is touched in these words. *Ab incursu et dæmonio meridiano*. And of all his temptations this is the most perilous, the most bitter, sharp, the most rigorous. For whereas in other temptations he useth either pleasant allectives unto sin, or other secret sleights and trains, and cometh in the night and stealeth on in the dark unaware, or in some other part of the day flieth and passeth by like an arrow, so shaping himself sometime in one fashion, sometime in another, and so dissimuling himself and his high mortal malice, that a man is thereby so blinded and beguiled, that he may not sometime perceive well what he is. In this temptation, this plain open persecution for the

faith, he cometh even in the very midday, that is to wit, even upon them that have an high light of faith shining in their heart, and openly suffereth himself so plainly be perceived, by his fierce, furious, malicious persecution against the faithful Christian, for hatred of Christ's true Catholic faith, that no man having faith can doubt what he is. For in this temptation he sheweth himself such as the prophet nameth him, *Dæmonium meridianum*—the midday devil: he may be so lightsomely seen with the eye of a faithful soul, by his fierce furious assault and incursion. For therefore saith the prophet, that the truth of God shall compass that man round about, that dwelleth in the faithful hope of his help with a pavice, *Ab incursu et dæmonio meridiano*—from the incursion and the devil of the midday, because this kind of persecution is not a wily temptation but a furious force and a terrible incursion.* In other of his temptations he stealeth on like a fox: but in this Turk's persecution for the faith he runneth on roaring with assault like a ramping lion.

* 1 Pet. v.

ii

THIS temptation is of all temptations also the most perilous. For whereas in temptations of prosperity, he useth only delectable allectives to move a man to sin, and in other kinds of tribulations and adversity he useth only grief and pain to pull a man into murmur, impatience, and blasphemy: in this kind of persecution for the faith of Christ he useth both twain, that is to wit, both his allectives of quiet and rest by deliverance from death and pain, with other pleasures also of this present life: and beside that, the terror and infliction of intolerable pain and torment. In other tribulation, as loss, or sickness, or death of our friends, though the pain be peradventure as great and sometime greater too; yet is not the peril nowhere nigh half so much. For in other tribulations, as I said before, the necessity that the man must of fine force abide and endure the pain, wax he never so wroth and impatient therewith, is a great reason and occasion to move him to keep his patience therein, and be content therewith, and thank God thereof, and of necessity to make a virtue that he may be rewarded for. But in this temptation, this persecution for the faith (I mean, not by fight in the field, by which the faithful man

standeth at his defense, and putteth the faithless in half the fear, and half the harm too), but where he is taken and in hold, and may for the forswearing or the denying of his faith be delivered and suffer to live in rest, and sometime in great worldly wealth also: in this case, I say, this thing that he needeth not to suffer this trouble and pain but he will, is a marvellous great occasion for him, to fall into the sin that the devil would drive him to, that is to wit, the forsaking of his faith. And therefore as I say, of all the devil's temptations is this temptation, this persecution for the faith, the most perilous.

iii

WE need, then, substantial advice and good counsel to meet this peril. I could rehearse from experience some of the pains and griefs that this persecution may bring, but it is better to speak of not your harms or mine, but of all the great sufferings in general that may hap to any man in this trouble.

Chapter XXXIV

THE LOSS OF OUTWARD GOODS

i

FOR first to begin at these outward goods, that neither are the proper goods of the soul, nor of the body, but are called the goods of fortune. What great good is there in these things of themself, for which they were worthy so much as to bear the name, by which the world of a worldly favour customably calleth them? For if the having of strength make a man strong, and the having of heat make a man hot, and the having of virtue make a man virtuous: how can these things be verily and truly good, which he that hath them, may by the having of them as well be the worse as the better, and (as experience proveth) more often is the worse than the better? When should a good man greatly rejoice in that, that he daily seeth most abound in the hands of many that be nought? Do not now this great Turk and his bassas in all these advancements of fortune,

surmount very far above any Christian estate, and any lords living under him? And are not mighty kingdoms soon translated from one man to another? Do not great properties constantly change their owners? So that the earth could say, he that trod proudly over my head now lieth low in my belly. What value can any man then set on possessions of which his hold is so unsafe.

ii

RICHES can give us raiment glittering with silk, and delicious victuals, But cloth would keep us nigh as warm, and plainer fare were within a little as wholesome. Then the labour in getting, the fear in the keeping, the pain in the parting from do more than counterpoise much of the pleasure they bring. Besides this, Riches taketh from his master many times his pleasure and his life. For many a man is for his riches slain, and those that find their pleasure in hoarding them, find therein their only content, as though they bare the key of another man's coffer, and rather live in need and misery all their lives than minish their hoard. Others hide it in a pot in the ground and leave it there till they die, and sometimes seven years after. From which place were it

stolen would he ever have been the poorer, since he never looked at it.

iii

HONOUR and fame, if thereby a man does his duties better, he gains good from them, but in the nature of the thing itself I perceive no great commodity that it hath. For such folk are by others envied and hated, and receive as much harm from their enemies as good from their friends. For what is Fame in itself but the blast of another man's mouth as soon passed, as spoken? Whereupon he that setteth his delight, feedeth himself but with wind, whereof be he never so full, he hath little substance therein: and many times shall he much deceive himself. For he shall ween that many praise him, that never speak word of him, and they that do, say yet much less than he weeneth, and far more seldom too. For they spend not all the day, he may be sure, in talking of him alone, and whoso command him most, will yet, I ween, in every four and twenty hours, wink and forget him at once. Besides this, that while one talketh well of him in one place, another sitteth and sayeth as shrewdly of him in another; and finally some that most praise him in his presence, behind his back mock him

as fast, and loud laugh him to scorn, and sometime slily to his own face too. And yet are there some fools so fed with this fond phantasy of fame, that they rejoice and glory to think how they be continually praised all about, as though all the world did nothing else day nor night but ever sit and sing, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,* upon them.

Chapter XXXV

AUTHORITY DESIRED FOR ITSELF

i

MEN desire authority for its own sake that they may bear a rule, command and control other men, and live uncommanded and uncontrolled themself. And yet this commodity took I so little heed of, that I never was aware it was so great, till a good friend of ours merrily told me once, that his wife once in a great anger taught it him. For when her husband had no list to grow greatly upward in the world, nor neither would labour for office of authority, and over that forsook a right worshipful room when it was offered him, she fell in hand with him (he told me) and all to rated him, and asked him: "What will you do, that you list not to put forth yourself, as other folks do? Will you sit still by the fire, and make goslings in the ashes with a stick, as children do? Would God I were a man, and look what I would do!" "Why, wife," quoth her husband, "what would

you do ? " " What ? By God ! go forward with the best of them. For, as my mother was wont to say (God have mercy on her soul !) it is ever better to rule, than to be ruled. And therefore by God ! I would not, I warrant you, be so foolish to be ruled where I might rule." " By my troth, wife," quoth her husband, " in this, I dare say, you say truth. For I never found you willing to be ruled yet."

ii

IT pleases indeed some men that others reverently salute them, stand bare-headed or even kneel before them. Yet these in turn but partly play at gleek, and to their cost pay honour for the reverence received. Nor twenty men's courtesies do him not so much pleasure as his own once kneeling doth him pain, if his knee hap to be sore. And I wist once a great officer of the king's say (and in good faith, I ween, he said but as he thought) that twenty men standing barehead before him, kept not his head half so warm, as to keep on his own cap. Nor he never took so much ease with their being barehead before him, as he caught once grief with a cough that came upon him, by standing barehead long before the king.

But let it be, that these commodities

be somewhat such as they be, yet then consider whether that any incommodities be so joined therewith, that a man were almost as good lack both, as have both. Goeth all thing evermore as every one of them would have it? That were as hard as to please all the people at once with one weather, while in one house the husband would have fair weather for his corn, and his wife would have rain for her leeks. So while they that are in authority be not all evermore of one mind, but sometimes variance among them, either for the respect of profit, or for contention of rule, or for maintenance of matters, sundry parts for their sundry friends: it cannot be that both the parts can have their own mind, nor often are they content which see their conclusion quail, but ten times they take the missing of their mind more displeasantly than other poor men do. And this goeth not only to men of mean authority, but unto the very greatest. The princes themselves cannot have, you wot well, all their will. For how were it possible, while each of them, almost would, if he might, be lord over the remnant? Then many men under their princes in authority are in the case, that privy malice and envy many bear them in heart, that falsely speak them fair, and praise them with their mouths, which

when there happeth any great fall unto them, bawl, and bark, and bite upon them like dogs.

iii

FINALLY, the cost and charge, the danger and peril of war, wherein their part is more than a poor man's is, sith the matter more dependeth upon them, and many a poor ploughman may sit still by the fire, while they must rise and walk. And sometime their authority falleth by change of their master's mind: and of that see we daily in one place or other ensamples such, and so many, that the parable of the philosopher can lack no testimony, which likened the servants of great princes unto the counters with which men do cast a count. For like as the counter that standeth sometime for a farthing, is suddenly set up and standeth for a thousand pound, and after as soon set down, and eftsoon beneath to stand for a farthing again: so fareth it, lo! sometime with those that seek the way to rise and grow up in authority, by the favour of great princes, that as they rise up high, so fall down again as low.

Howbeit, though a man escape all such adventures, and abide in great authority till he die, yet then at the leastwise every

man must leave at the last: and that which we call at last, hath no very long time to it. Let a man reckon his years that are passed of his age, ere ever he can get up aloft; and let him when he hath it first in his fist, reckon how long he shall be like to live after, and I ween, that then the most part shall have little cause to rejoice, they shall see the time likely to be so short that their honour and authority by nature shall endure, beside the manifold chances whereby they may lose it more soon. And then when they see that they must needs leave it, the thing which they did much more set their heart upon, than ever they had reasonable cause: what sorrow they take therefor, that shall I not need to tell you.

And thus it seemeth unto me, cousin, in good faith, that sith in the having the profit is not great, and the displeasures neither small nor few, and of the losing so many sundry chances, and that by no mean a man can keep it long, and that to part therefrom is such a painful grief: I can see no very great cause, for which, as an high worldly commodity, men should greatly desire it.

Chapter XXXVI

NO COMPROMISE

i

SUPPOSING the Turk requesteth of me, you ask, not to forswear Christ or His faith, but only such parts thereof as will not stand with Mahometan law and the recognition of Mahomet as a true prophet, and further demanded that I fight for the Turks against the Christian Kings, might I not do so if I still kept Christ in my heart and worshipped Him also as man.—To this question I answer, Christ will not take your service at halves to serve Him and the enemy both. He warns you by St. Paul what fellowship hath God and King? And by His own mouth *Nemo potest duobus dominis servire*—No man may serve two lords at once.* He will have you believe all that He telleth you, and do all that He biddeth you, and forbear all that he forbiddeth you, without any manner exception. Break one of his commandments,

* Matt. vi.

and break all. Forsake one point of His faith and forsake all, as for any thank you get for the remnant. And therefore if you devise as it were indentures between God and you, what thing you will do for Him, and what thing you will not do, as though He should hold him content with such service of yours, as yourself list to appoint him: if you make, I say, such indentures, you shall seal both the parts yourself, and you get thereto none agreement of Him. And this I say though the Turk would make such an appointment with you as you speak of, and would when he had made it, keep it, whereas he would not, I warrant you, leave you so, when he had brought you so far forth, but would little and little after ere he left you, make you deny Christ altogether, and take Mahomet in his stead. And so doth he in the beginning, when he will not have you believe him to be God. For surely if he were not God, he were no good man either, while he plainly said he was God. Christ forsaw this mind of yours of giving him half service in order to keep your riches where he said 1,500 years ago—*Non potestis Deo servire, et Mammonæ.*—You cannot serve both God and your riches together.*

* Matth. vi.

ii

AND therefore this thing established for a plain conclusion, which you must needs grant, if you have faith (and if you be gone from that ground of faith already then is all your disputation, you wot well, at an end. For whereto should you then rather lose your goods than forsake your faith, if you have lost your faith and let it go already ?) this point, I say therefore, put first for a ground between us both twain agreed, that you have yet the faith still, and intend to keep it alway still in your heart, and are but in doubt, whether you will lose all your worldly substance rather than forsake your faith in your only word : now shall I reply to the point of your answer, wherein you tell me the loathness of the loss, and the comfort of the keeping letteth you to forego them, and moveth you rather to forsake your faith. I let pass all that I have spoken of the small commodity of them unto your body, and of the great harm that the having of them doth to your soul. And sith the promise of the Turk, made unto you for the keeping of them, is the thing that moveth you and maketh you thus to doubt, I ask you first, whereby you wot that when you have done all that he will have you do against Christ to the harm

of your soul whereby wot you, I say, that he will keep you his promise in these things that he promiseth you, concerning the retaining of your well-beloved worldly wealth for the pleasure of your body?

iii

YOU can place no security on the Turk's promises. I have known him, and his father before him too, break more promises than five, as great as this is that he should here make with you. Who shall come and cast it in his teeth, and tell him it is a shame for him to be so fickle and so false of his promise? And then what careth he for those words, that he wotteth well he shall never hear? Not very much, although they were told him to. If you might come after and complain your grief unto his own person yourself, you should find him as shamefast as a friend of mine (a merchant) found once the Soudan of Syria, to whom (being certain years about his merchandise in that country) he gave a great sum of money for a certain office meet for him there for the while, which he scant had granted him and put in his hand, but that ere ever it were ought worth unto him the Soudan suddenly sold it to another of his own sect, and put our Hungarian out. Then came he to him, and

humbly put him in remembrance of his grant passed his own mouth and signed with his own hand. Whereunto the Soudan answered him with a grim countenance: "I will thou wit it, losel, that neither my mouth nor my hand shall be master over me, to bind all my body at their pleasure, but I will so be lord and master over them both, that whatsoever the one say, or the other wit, I will be at mine own liberty to do what me list myself, and ask them both no leave. And therefore go get thee hence out of my countries, knave." Ween you now, that Soudan and this Turk, being both of one false sect, you may not find them both like false of their promise?

Chapter XXXVII

COMFORT IN CAPTIVITY

i

THE thraldom of captivity is indeed painful. But yet not half so much as it would be if they carried me to any such unknown country that God would not wit where. I am very sure that whithersoever men convey me, God is no more verily here, than he shall be there: if I get (as I may, if I will) the grace to set my whole heart on him, and long for nothing but Him, it can then make no great matter to my mind whether they carry me hence or leave me here. I may imagine this country mine own, but it is not so. For, as St. Paul saith, *Non habemus hic civitatem manentem, sed futuram inquirimus*—We have here no city nor dwelling country at all, but we look for one that we shall come to.* And in what country soever we walk in this world, we be but as pilgrims and wayfaring men. And if I should take any country for my

* Heb. xiii.

own, it must be that country to which I come, and not the country from which I came. That country that shall be to me then for a while so strange, shall yet, pardie, be no more strange to me, nor longer strange to me, neither than was mine own native country when I came first into it. And therefore if that point of my being far from hence be very grievous to me, and that I find it a great pain, that I am not where I would be : that grief shall great part grow for lack of sure setting and settling my mind in God, where it should be which fault of mine when I mend, I shall soon ease my grief.

ii

A SERVILE condition, being under the restraint and the command of another, is indeed a heavy burden. Yet the liberty, of which we regret the loss so much, is not so large as we fancy. For what man is there so free that can do what him list ? First he is restrained by the law of God in more than half the things he would do, and though he ignores the law, and does his own will, yet we reckon our liberty none the less for that. He is restrained by the laws of men, and these we should not observe but for fear of penalties. He is

restrained again by the tyranny of the world which commands things so sore against our wills that it makes us very bondsmen. These points well considered our liberty proves much less than we took it for. Yet the heaviest bondage is that of sin, which fetters almost every man that boasts himself free. *Omnis qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati*—Every man that committeth sin, is the thrall, or the bondsman of sin.* Let us look well, how many things and of what vile wretched sort the devil driveth us to do daily through the rash braids of our blind affections, which we be for our faithful lack of grace fain to follow, and are too feeble to refrain, and then shall we find in our natural freedom our bond service such, that never was there any man lord of any so vile a villain, that ever would for very shame command him so shameful service. And let us in the doing of our service to the man that we be slave unto, remember what we were wont to do about the same time of the day, while we were at our free liberty before, and were well likely, if we were at liberty to do the like again: and we shall peradventure perceive, that it were better for us to do this business than that.

* Johan. viii.

iii

NOW shall we have great occasion of comfort, if we consider, that our servitude (though in the count of the world it seem to come by chance of war) cometh yet in very deed unto us, by the provident hand of God, and that for our great good, if we will take it well, both in remission of sins, and also matter of our merit. The greatest grief that is in bondage or captivity is this, as I trow, that we be forced to do such labour as with our good will we would not. But then against that grief Seneca teacheth us a good remedy: *Semper da operam, ne quid invitus facias* —Endeavour thyself evermore, that thou do nothing against thy will: but the thing that we see we shall needs do, let us use alway to put our good will thereto. Our froward mind maketh every good thing hard, and that unto our own more hurt and harm. But in this case, if we will be good Christian men, we shall have great cause gladly to be content for the great comfort that we may take thereby, while we remember that in the patient and glad doing of our service unto the man for God's sake, according to his high commandment by the mouth of St. Paul—*Servi, obedite dominis carnalibus**

* Ephes. vi.

—we shall have our thank and our whole reward of God. Finally, if we remember the great humble meekness of our Saviour Christ himself, that He being very Almighty God, *Humiliavit semetipsum formam servi accipiens*—Humbled Himself, and took the form of a bondman or a slave,* rather than his father should forsake us: we may think ourself very unkind caitives, and very frantic fools too, if rather than to endure this worldly bondage for a while, we would forsake him that hath by His own death delivered us out of everlasting bondage of the devil, and will for our short bondage give us everlasting liberty.

* Philip. i.

Chapter XXXVIII

COMFORT IN PRISON

i

IF imprisonment be lack of liberty to go where we list, then is no man really free. For a prison is a place where criminals are confined until they be led out for execution, and in this sense I argue the whole world is a prison and God is our jailor. We enter it when He wills under sentence of death because of our original sin, and the sentence is carried out when He wills. It matters not whether the prison be a large park or a whole kingdom or a narrow cell, all alike live condemned to death and have no means of escape. This may seem but a sophistical phantasy, yet it is a very substantial truth which has filled my mind for years. And—yet because God lets us walk about in this prison and do what we like, in subjection to His law we wax so wanton as to believe ourselves lords at large. Upon our prison we build, our prison we garnish with gold, and make it glorious. In this prison they

buy and sell, in this prison they brawl and chide, in this prison they run together and fight ; in this they dice, in this they card, in this they pipe and revel, in this they sing and dance. And in this prison many a man reputed right honest, letteth not for his pleasure in the dark privily to play the knave. And thus while God the king, and our chief jailor too, suffereth us and letteth us alone, we ween ourself at liberty, and we abhor the state of those whom we call prisoners, taking ourselves for no prisoners at all.

ii

BUT you say in this prison of the world there are no stocks or fetters or close confinement. God our chief jailor, as himself is invisible, so useth he in his punishment invisible instruments : and therefore not of like fashion as the other jailors do, but yet of like effect, and as painful in feeling, as those. For he layeth one of his prisoners with an hot fever, as evil at his ease in a warm bed, as the other jailor layeth his upon the cold ground. He wringeth by the brows with a megrim, he collareth them by the neck with a quinsy, he bolteth them by the arms with a palsy, that they cannot lift their hands to their heads : he manacleth their hands

with the gout in their fingers, he wringeth them by the legs with a cramp in their shins, he bindeth them to the bed-board with the crick in the back, and layeth one there long, and as unable to rise, as though he lay by the feet fast in the stocks. Some prisoner of another jail singeth, danceth in his two fetters, and feareth not his feet for stumbling at a stone; while God's prisoner, that hath but his one foot fettered with the gout, lieth groaning on a couch, and quaketh and crieth out, if he fear there would fall on his foot no more but a cushion.

iii

NOW I have not said that imprisonment causes no displeasure, but I do say for our comfort that our phantasy taketh it for sorer than it is. We exaggerate the extent of our freedom and the unreality of our confinement. Nor are the incommodities you name of the straightness of space and a bolted door, but slender if we are called upon to suffer for God's sake. Many a good man there is, you wot well, which without force at all, or any necessity wherefore he should so do, suffereth these two things willingly of his own choice, with much other hardness more,—holy monks, I mean, of the

Charterhouse order, such as never pass their cells, but only to the church set fast by their cells, and thence to their cells again; and S. Bridget's order; and S. Clare's much like, and, in a manner all close religious houses. And yet ancres and ancresses most specially, all whose whole room is less than a merely large chamber; and yet are they there as well content many long years together, as are other men, and better too, that walk about the world. And therefore you may see, that the loathness of less room, and the door shut upon us, while so many folk are so well content therewith, and will for God's love live so to chuse, is but an horror enhanced of our own phantasy.

iv

BUT now, if we have not lost our faith already, before we come to forsake it for fear; we know very well by our faith, that by the forsaking of our faith, we fall into the state to be cast into the prison of hell, and that can we not tell how soon. But as it may be, that God will suffer us to live a while here upon earth, so may it be, that he will throw us into that dungeon beneath, before the time that the Turk shall once ask us the question. And therefore if we fear imprisonment

so sore, we be much more than mad if we fear not most the far more sore. For out of that prison shall no man never get, and in this other shall no man abide but a while. In prison was Joseph, while his brethren were at large, and yet after were his brethren fain to seek upon him for bread.* In prison was Daniel, and the wild lions about him:† and yet even there God kept him harmless, and brought him safe out again. If we think, that he will not do the like for us, let us not doubt but he will do for us either the like, or better. For better may he do for us, if he suffer us there to die.

St. John the Baptist was, ye wot well, in prison,‡ while Herod and Herodias sat full merry at the feast, and the daughter of Herodias delighted them with her dancing, till with her dancing she danced off St. John's head. And now sitteth he with great feast in Heaven at God's board, while Herod and Herodias full heavily sit in hell burning both twain, and to make them sport withal, the devil with the damsel dance in the fire afore them. Finally, cousin, to finish this piece with, our Saviour was himself taken prisoner for our sake, and prisoner was he carried, and prisoner was he kept, and prisoner was

* Gen. xxxix. et xlii.
† Daniel vi.
‡ Matth. xiv.

he brought forth before Annas.* And prisoner from Annas carried unto Caiphas.† Then prisoner was he carried from Caiphas unto Pilate, and prisoner was he sent from Pilate to King Herod :‡ prisoner from Herod unto Pilate again.§ And so kept as prisoner to the end of His passion. The time of His imprisonment, I grant well, was not long ; but as for hard handling (which our hearts most abhor) he had as much in that short while, as many men among them all in much longer time. And surely then, if we consider of what estate he was, and therewith that he was prisoner in such wise for our sake, we shall I trow (but if we be worse than wretched beasts) never so shamefully play the unkind cowards, as for fear of imprisonment sinfully to forsake him ; nor so foolish neither, as by forsaking of him, to give him the occasion again to forsake us, and with the avoiding of an easier prison, fall into a worse, and instead of a prison that cannot keep us long, fall into that prison, out of which we can never come, whereas the short imprisonment would win us everlasting liberty.

* Matth. xxvi. † Johan. xviii.
‡ Luc. xxiii. § Matth. xxvii.

Chapter XXXIX

COMFORT IN DEATH

i

DEATH is the sorest pinch of all, and there be three lacks that make men loath to die. Lack of faith, lack of hope, or lack of wit. They that believe not in the life to come, and ween themselves here in wealth are loath to leave this, for then they think they lose all. And thereof cometh the manifold foolish unfaithful words, which are so rife in over many men's mouths, *This world we know, and the other we know not,* and that some say in sport, and think in earnest *The devil is not so black as he is painted,* and, *Let him be as black as he will, he is no blacker than a crow,* with many other such foolish phantasies of the same sort.

Some that believe well enough, yet through the lewdness of living, fall out of good hope of salvation, and then though they be loath to die, I very little marvel. Howbeit, some that purpose to mend, and would fain have some time left them

longer to bestow somewhat better, may peradventure be loath to die also by-and-by. And that manner loathness (albeit a very good will gladly to die, and to be with God, were in my mind so thankful that it were well able to purchase as full remission both of sin and pain, as peradventure he were like if he lived to purchase in many years' penance), yet will I not say, but that such kind of loathness to die may be before God allowable. Some are there also, that are loath to die, that are yet very glad to die, and long for to be dead.

ii

SUCH was the case with St. Paul, which for the longing that he had to be with God, would fain have been dead, but for the profit of other folk, was content to live here in pain, and defer and forbear for the while his inestimable bliss in Heaven. *Desiderium habens dissolvi et esse cum Christo, multo magis melius: Permanere autem in carne, necessarium propter vos.** But of all these kinds of folk, cousin, that are loath to die (except the first kind only that lacketh faith), there is, I suppose, none but that except the fear of shame, or sharp pain joined unto death, should

* Philip. i.

be the lot, would else for the bare respect of death alone, let to depart hence with good will in this case of the faith, well witting by his faith, that his death taken for the faith should cleanse him clean of all his sins, and send him straight to Heaven. And some of these (namely the last kind) are such, that shame and pain both joined unto death were unlikely to make them loath death, or fear death so sore, but that they would suffer death in this case with good will, sith they know well that the refusing of the faith for any cause in this world (were the cause never so good in sight) should yet sever them from God, with whom (save for other folks' profit) they so fain would be. And charity can it not be, for the profit of the whole world, deadly to displease him that made it.

Some are there, I say also, that are loath to die for lack of wit, which albeit that they believe the world that is to come, and hope also to come thither, yet they love so much the wealth of this world, and such things as delight them therein, that they would fain keep them as long as ever they might, even with tooth and nail. And when they may be suffered in no wise to keep it no longer, but that death taketh them therefrom; then if it may be no better, they will agree to be (as soon as they be hence) hanced up unto Heaven,

and be with God by-and-by. These folk are as very idiot fools, as he that had kept from his childhood a bag full of cherry-stones, and cast such a phantasy thereto, that he would not go from it, for a bigger bag filled full of gold.

iii

THESE folk fare like the snail in Æsop's fable who refused to come to Jupiter's feast because she liked her own house better, and was therefore condemned to bear her own house always on her back. And surely such Christian folk as by their foolish affection, which they have set like the snail upon their own house here, this earth, cannot for the loathness of leaving that house, find in their heart with their good will to go to the great feast that God prepareth in Heaven, and of His goodness so gently calleth them to, be like, I fear me (but if they mend that mind in time), to be served as the snail was, and yet much worse too. For they be like to have their house here (the earth), bound fast upon their backs for ever, and not walk therewith where they will, as the snail creepeth about with hers, but lie fast bound in the midst with the foul fire of hell about them. For into this folly they

bring themself by their own fault, as the drunken man bringeth himself into drunkenness, whereby the evil that he doeth in his drunkenness is not forgiven him for his folly, but to his pain imputed to his fault.

Chapter XL

SHAME IN MARTYRDOM

i

HOW can any faithful wise man dread the death so sore for any respect of shame, when his reason and his faith together may shortly make him perceive, that there is therein no piece of very shame at all. For how can that death be shameful that is glorious? Or how can it be but glorious to die for the faith of Christ (if we die both for the faith, and in the faith joined with hope and charity), while the Scripture so plainly saith, *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus*—Precious is in the sight of God, the death of his saints.* Now if the death of his saints be glorious in the sight of God, it can never be shameful in very deed, how shameful so ever it seem here in the sight of men. For here we may see and be sure, that not at the death of St. Stephen only† (to whom it liked him to shew himself with the Heaven open

* Psalm cxv. † Act. vii.

over his head) but at the death also of every man that so dieth for the faith, God with His Heavenly company beholdeth his whole passion, and verily looketh on.* Now if it so were, cousin, that you should be brought through the broad high street of a great long city, and that all along the way that you were going, there were on the one side of the way a rabble of ragged beggars and madmen that would despise you and dispraise you with all the shameful names that they could call you, and all the villainous names that they could say to you: and that there were then along the other side of the same street where you should come by a goodly company standing in a fair range, a row of wise and worshipful folk, allowing and commending you, more than fifteen times as many as that rabble of ragged beggars and railing madmen are: would you let your way by your will, weening that you went unto your shame for the shameful jesting and railing of those mad foolish wretches, or hold on your way with a good cheer and a glad heart, thinking yourself much honoured by the laud and approbation of that other honourable sort?

* 1 Cor. iv.

ii

THEN, cousin, can there no man that hath faith, account himself ashamed here by any manner death that he suffereth for the faith of Christ, while how vile and how shameful soever it seem in the sight here of a few worldly wretches, it is allowed and approved for very precious and honourable in the sight of God, and all the glorious company of Heaven, which as perfectly stand and behold it, as these peevish people do, and are in number more than an hundred to one : and of that hundred, every one an hundred times more to be regarded and esteemed, than of the other an hundred such whole rabbles. And now if a man would be so mad, as for fear of the rebuke, that he should have of such rebukeful beasts, he would be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ : then with fleeing from a shadow of shame, he should fall into a very shame and a deadly painful shame indeed. For then hath our Saviour made a sure promise, that he will shew Himself ashamed of that man before the Father of Heaven, and all his holy angels, saying : He that is ashamed of Me and My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in the majesty of Himself, and of His Father, and of the

holy Angels.* And what manner a shameful shame shall that be then? If a man's cheeks glow sometimes for shame in this world, they will fall on fire for shame when Christ shall shew Himself ashamed of them there.

iii

I WOULD, sith we regard so greatly the estimation of wordly folk, we would among many naughty things that they use, regard also some such as are good. For it is a manner among them in many places, that some by handicraft, some by merchandise, some by other kind of living, rise and come forward in the world. And commonly folk are in youth set forth to convenient masters, under whom they be brought up and grow. But now whensoever they find a servant such, as disdaineth to do such things as he, that his master, did while he was servant himself; that servant every man accounteth for a proud unthrift, never like to come to good proof. Let us so mark and consider this, and weigh well therewithal, that our master Christ, not the master only, but the maker too of all this whole world, was not so proud to disdain for our sakes the villainous and most shameful death after

* Luc. ix.

the worldly account that then was used in the world, and the most despiteful mocking therewith joined to most grievous pain, as crowning him with sharp thorns that the blood ran down about his face: then they gave him a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and kneeled down to him, and saluted him like a king in scorn, and beat then the reed upon the sharp thorns about his holy head. Now saith our Saviour, that the disciple or servant is not above his Master.* And therefore sith our Master endured so many kinds of painful shame, very proud beasts may we well think ourself, if we disdain to do as our Master did: and whereas he through shame ascended into glory,† we would be so mad, that we rather will fall into everlasting shame, both before Heaven and hell, than for fear of a short worldly shame, to follow him into everlasting glory.

* Luc. vi. † Johan. xiii.

Chapter XLI

PAIN IN MARTYRDOM

1

TRUTH is it, cousin, that no man can with all the reason he hath, in such wise change the nature of pain, that in the having of pain he feel it not. For, if it be not felt, it is pardie, no pain. And that is the natural cause, cousin, for which a man may have his leg stricken off by the knee and grieve him not, if his head be off but half an hour before. But reason may make a reasonable man (though he would not be so foolish as causeless to fall therein) yet upon good causes, either of gaining some kind of great profit, or avoiding some kind of great loss, or eschewing thereby the suffering of far greater pain, not to shrink therefrom, and refuse it to his more hurt and harm, but for his far greater advantage and commodity, content and glad to sustain it. And this doth reason alone in many cases, where it hath much less help to take hold of, than it hath in this matter

of faith. For well you wot, to take a sour and a bittter potion is great grief and displeasure, and to be lanced and to have the flesh cut is no little pain. Now when such things shall be ministered unto a child, or to some childish man either, they will by their own wills rather let their sickness or their sore grow on to their more grief till it become incurable, than abide the pain of the cutting in time, and that for faint heart, joined with lack of discretion. But a man that hath more wisdom, though he would without cause no more abide the pain willingly, than would the other: yet sith reason sheweth him what good he shall have by the suffering, and what harm by the refusing, this maketh him well content, and glad also to take it.

Now then, if reason alone be sufficient to move a man to take pain for the gaining of some worldly rest or pleasure, and for the avoiding of another pain, though peradventure more, yet durable but for a short season: why should not reason, furthered with faith and grace, be much more able to engender in us first such an affection, and after by long and deep meditation thereof, so to continue that affection, that it shall turn into an habitual fast and deep-rooted purpose of patient suffering the painful death of this body

here in earth, for the gaining of everlasting wealthy life in Heaven, and avoiding of everlasting painful death in hell?

ii

THIS is very true you say. Yet as a fact you feel that when you heard the Turks yelping after you, you would flee as the harts did from the little pup in Æsop's fable. But these harts had no reason, and though reason by itself can do little, yet Grace is ever ready to help us, and the Prophet tells us not to be as unreasonable beasts, as the horse and mule which have no understanding. Have no doubt that if we keep our mind from worldly vanities and fix it on God He will so well work therewith, that we shall find great strength therein, and not in such wise have all such shameful cowardous hearts, as to forsake our Saviour, and thereby lose our own salvation, and run into eternal fire, for fear of death joined therewith, though bitter and sharp, yet short for all that, and in a manner a momentary pain.

iii

BUT a violent death you say is more painful than a natural one. By my troth methinketh that the death which men call commonly natural, is a violent death to every man whom it fetcheth hence by force against his will, and that is every man which, when he dieth, is loath to die, and fain would yet live longer if he might. Howbeit, how small the pain is in the natural death, cousin, fain would I wit who hath told you. As far as I can perceive, those folk that commonly depart of their natural death, have ever one disease and sickness or other, whereof if the pain of the whole week or twain, in which they lie pining in their bed, were gathered together into short a time, as a man hath his pain that dieth a violent death; it would, I ween, make double the pain that it is. So that he that naturally dieth, ofter suffereth more pain than less, though he suffer it in a longer time. And then would many a man be more loath to suffer so long in lingering pain, than with a sharper to be sooner rid. And yet lieth many a man more days than one in well near as great pain continually, as is the pain that with the violent death riddeth the man in less than half an hour; except a man would ween that whereas

the pain is great, to have a knife cut his flesh in the outside from the skin inward, the pain would be much less, if the knife might on the inside begin, and cut from the midst outward. Some we hear in their deathbeds complain, that they think they feel sharp knives cut a-two their heart-strings. Some cry out and think they feel within the brainpan, their head pricked even full of pins. And they that lie in a pleurisy think that every time they cough, they feel a sharp sword swap them to the heart.

Chapter XLII

THE PAIN OF HELL.

i

FOR our present matter there is no need to compare a violent and a natural death. For he who for fear of the violent death forsakes the faith of Christ puts himself in peril of finding his natural death a thousand times more painful. For his natural death hath his everlasting pain so suddenly knit unto it, that there is not one moment of an hour between, but the end of the one is the beginning of the other that after shall never have end. And therefore was it not without great cause, that Christ gave us so good warning before, when He said as St. Luke rehearseth: I say to you that are my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and which when that is done, are able to do no more. But I shall shew you, whom you shall fear: Fear Him, that when He hath killed, hath in His power farther to cast him, whom He killeth, into everlasting fire: So I say to you, be afraid

of Him.* God meaneth not here, that we should nothing dread at all any man that can but kill the body, but He meaneth that we should not in such wise dread any such, that we should for dread of them, displease Him that can everlastingly kill both body and soul with a death ever dying, and that shall yet never die. And therefore he addeth and repeateth in the end again, the fear that we should have of Him, and saith: *Ita dico vobis, hunc timete*,—So I say to you, fear Him.

ii

O GOOD God! cousin, if a man would weigh well these words and let them sink, as they should do, down deep into his heart, and often bethink himself thereon, it would, I doubt not, be able enough, to make us set at nought all the great Turk's threats, and esteem him not a straw, but well content to endure all the pain that all the world could put upon us (for so short while as all they were able to make us dwell therein) rather than by the shrinking from those pains (though never so sharp, yet but short) to cast ourself into the pain of hell an hundred thousand times more intolerable, and whereof there shall never come an end. A

* Luc. xii.

woful death is that death, in which folk shall evermore be dying, and never can once be dead. Whereof the Scripture saith, *Desiderabunt mori, et mors fugiet ab eis,*— They shall call, and cry for death, and death shall flee from them.*

iii

O GOOD Lord, if one of them were now put in the choice of both, they would rather suffer the whole year together the most terrible death that all the Turks in Turkey could devise, than the death that they lie in for the space of half an hour. In how wretched folly fall then these faithless or feeble faithed folk, that to avoid the pain so far the less and so short, fall in the stead thereof into pain a thousand thousand times more horrible, and of which terrible torment, they be sure they shall never have end! This matter, cousin, lacketh, as I believe, but either full faith or sufficient minding. For I think, on my faith, if we have the Grace verily to believe it, and often to think well thereon, the fear of all the Turk's persecution (with all that this midday devil were able to make them do in the forcing us to forsake our faith) should never be able to turn us.

* Apocal. ix.

Chapter XLIII

THE JOYS OF HEAVEN

i

FORSOOTH, cousin, if we were such as we should be, I would scant for very shame (in exhortation to the keeping of Christ's faith) speak of the pains of hell. I would rather put us in mind of the joys of Heaven, the pleasure whereof we should be more glad to get it, than we should be to flee and scape all the pains in hell. But surely God in that thing, wherein he may seem most rigorous, is marvellous merciful to us, and that is (which many men would little ween) in that he provided hell. For I suppose very surely, cousin, that many a man and woman too, of whom there sit some now, and more shall hereafter sit, full gloriously crowned in Heaven, had they not first been afraid of hell, would toward Heaven never have set foot forward. But yet undoubtedly were it so, that we could as well conceive in our hearts the marvellous joys of Heaven, as we conceive the fearful pains of hell

(howbeit sufficiently we can conceive neither), but if we could in our imagination draw as much toward the perceiving of the one, as we may toward the consideration of the other, we would not fail to be far more moved and stirred to the suffering for Christ's sake in the world, for the winning of those Heavenly joys, than for the eschewing of all these infernal pains. But forasmuch as the fleshly pleasures be far less pleasant, than the fleshly pains are painful; therefore we fleshly folk that are so drowned in these fleshly pleasures, and in the desire thereof, that we can have almost no manner savour or taste in any pleasure spiritual, have no cause to marvel that our fleshly affections be more abated and refrained by the dread and terror of hell, than affections spiritual imprinted in us, and pricked forward with the desire and joyful hope of Heaven.

ii

HOW great and marvellous is the Scriptures* description of Heavenly joys: "I shall be satiate O Lord where Thy great glory shall appear," or "righteous men shall shine as the sun, and run about like sparks of fire among the reeds." But tell some carnal-minded man of this

* Esai. lxiv.; 1 Cor. iv.

manner of pleasure, and he shall take little pleasure therein, and say he careth not to have his flesh shine, he, nor like a spark of fire to skip about in the sky. Tell him, that his body shall be impassable, and never feel harm: yet if he think then therewith, that he shall never be an hungered, nor athirst, and shall thereby forbear all his pleasure of eating and drinking, and that he shall never have lust to sleep, and thereby lose the pleasure that he was wont to take in slugging, and that men and women shall there live together as angels, without any manner mind or motion of carnal fashion he will say, he is better at ease already, and would not give this world for that. For as St. Paul saith, *Animalis homo non percipit ea quæ sunt Spiritus Dei, stultitia enim est illi*—A carnal man feeleth not the things that be of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him.* But when he shall, I say, after this life have his fleshly pleasures in abomination, and shall of those heavenly joys, which he set here so little by, have there a glimmering, though far from a perfect sight: oh, good God! how fain will he then be, with how good will and how glad will he then give this whole world, if it were his, to have the feeling of some little part of these joys! And therefore let us all

* 1 Cor. ii.

that we can, conceive now such delight in the consideration of them as we should have often in our eyes by reading, often in our ears by hearing, often in our mouths by rehearsing, often in our hearts by meditation and thinking upon those joyful words of Holy Scripture, by which we learn, how wonderful huge and great those spiritual heavenly joys are, of which our carnal hearts have so feeble and so faint a feeling, and our dull worldly wits so little able to conceive so much as a shadow of the right imagination.

iii

OF that Heavenly joy Our Lord will give to the martyrs a special kind. "To him that overcometh I will make him a pillar in the Temple of my God and he shall go no more out thereof."* The martyrs are the pillars of the Church. They are so because they have suffered. But their sufferings are not to be compared to the glory to come. St. Paul, who had suffered so much, said this same short and momentary tribulation of ours that is in this present time, worketh within us the weight of glory above measure—*in sublimitate*—on high, we beholding not those things that we see, but those things

* Apoc. iii, 12.

that we see not. For these things that we see, be but temporal things: but those things that are not seen are eternal.* Now to this great glory can there no man come headless. Our head is Christ,† and therefore to him must we be joined, and as members of his must we follow him, if we will come thither. He is our guide to guide us thither, and is entered in before us. And he therefore that will enter in after, *Debet sicut ille ambulavit, et ipse ambulare*—The same way that Christ walked, the same way must he walk.‡ And what was the way by which he walked into Heaven, himself sheweth what way it was that his Father had provided for him, where he said unto the two disciples, going towards the castle of Emaus, *Nonne hæc oportuit pati Christum, et ita intrare in gloriam suam?*—Know ye not that Christ must suffer passion, and by that way enter into His kindgom?§ Who can for very shame desire to enter into the kingdom of Christ with ease, when he himself entered not into his own without pain.

* 2 Cor. iv. † Ephes. v.
‡ 1 Johan. ii. § Luc. ult.

Chapter XLIV

THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

i

SURELY, as I said before, in bearing the loss of worldly goods the sample of our Saviour Himself were of itself alone sufficient to encourage every kind Christian man and woman, to refuse none of all those calamities for his sake. So say I now for painful death also, that if a right imagination and remembrance of Christ's bitter painful passion,* of the many sore bloody strokes that the cruel tormentors with rods and whips gave Him upon every part of His holy tender body, the scornful crown of sharp thorns beaten down upon His holy head, so strait and so deep, that on every part His blessed blood issued out and streamed down His lovely limbs drawn and stretched out upon the cross, to the intolerable pain of his forbeaten and sore beaten veins and sinews, new feeling with the cruel stretching and straining pain, far passing any

* Johan. xix. ; Matth. xxvii. ; Marc. xv. ; Luc. xxiii.

cramp in every part of His blessed body at once: then the great long nails cruelly driven with hammers through His holy hands and feet, and in this horrible pain lift up and let hang with the poise of all his body, bearing down upon the painful wounded places, so grievously pierced with nails, and in such torment (without pity, but not without many despites) suffered to be pined and pained the space of more than three long hours, till Himself willingly gave up unto His Father His holy soul: after which yet to shew the mightiness of their malice, after His holy soul departed, they pierced His holy heart with a sharp spear, at which issued out the holy blood and water whereof His holy sacraments have inestimable secret strength: if we would, I say, remember these things in such wise, as would God we would, I verily think and suppose that the consideration of His incomparable kindness could not in such wise fail to inflame our key-cold hearts, and set them on fire in His love, that we should find ourself not only content, but also glad and desirous, to suffer death for His sake, that so marvellous lovingly letted not to sustain so far passing painful death for ours.

ii

WOULD God we would here to the shame of our cold affection again toward God, for such fervent love, and inestimable kindness of God toward us: would God we would, I say, but consider what hot affection many of these fleshly lovers have borne, and daily do bear to those upon whom they doat! How many of them have not letted to jeopard their lives, and how many have willingly lost their lives indeed without either great kindness shewed them before (and afterward, you wot well, they could nothing win), but even that it contented and satisfied their mind, that by their death their lover should clearly see how faithfully they loved? The delight whereof, imprinted in their phantasy, not assuaged only, but counterpoised also (they thought) all their pain. Of these affections with the wonderful dolorous effects following thereon, not only old written stories, but over that I think in every country Christian and heathen both, experience giveth us proof enough. And is it not then a wonderful shame for us for the dread of temporal death, to forsake our Saviour that willingly suffered so painful death, rather than He would forsake us, considering that beside that He shall for our suffering so highly

reward us with everlasting wealth? Oh! if he that is content to die for her love, of whom he looketh after for no reward and yet by his death goeth from her, might by His death be sure to come to her: such a lover would not let here to die for her twice. And how cold lovers be we then unto God, if rather than die for Him once we will refuse Him and forsake Him for ever that both died for us before, and hath also provided that if we die here for Him, we shall in Heaven everlastingly both live and also reign with Him. For, as St. Paul saith, if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him.*

iii

AS a man hurt in a fray feeleth not sometimes his wound, nor yet is ware thereof, so the mind ravished in the contemplation of Christ's death, Hell and Heaven would but little feel the fear or the suffering of a painful death. Of this I have no doubt that if the Turk with his whole army were at hand ready to inflict all their torments upon us, and if on the other side the ground suddenly opened, and the devils rose out of Hell in their hideousness and we saw the silly souls tormented by them in the pestilent pit we

* Rom. viii.

should make little amount of the Turk's host. What man if a lion is about to devour him would regard the biting of a little foisting cur ? I think further that if there suddenly appeared the glory of God, the ever Blessed Trinity, Our Saviour in the Sacred Humanity sitting on His throne with His Immaculate Mother, and all the glorious company calling us to them we should run towards them though the Turk and all the devils lay to kill us on our way.

iv

WHEN we feel us too bold, remember our own feebleness. When we feel us too faint, remember Christ's strength. In our fear, let us remember Christ's painful agony, that Himself would (for our comfort) suffer before His passion, to the intent that no fear should make us despair. And ever call for His help, such as Himself list to send us, and then we need never to doubt, but that either He shall keep us from the painful death, or shall not fail so to strength us in it, that he shall joyously bring us to Heaven by it. And then doth he much more for us, than if He kept us from it. For as God did more for poor Lazar,* in helping him patiently to die

* Luc. xvi.

for hunger at the rich man's door, than if he had brought him to the door all the rich glutton's dinner: so though He be gracious to a man, whom He delivereth out of painful trouble, yet doth He much more for a man, if through right painful death He deliver him from this wretched world into eternal bliss. From which whosoever shrink away with forsaking of His faith, and falleth in the peril of everlasting fire, he shall be very sure to repent it ere it be long after. For I ween that whensoever he falleth sick next, he will wish that he had been killed for Christ's sake before. What folly is it then for fear to flee from that death, which thou seest thou shalt shortly after wish thou hadst died? Yea, I ween, almost every good Christian man would very fain this day, that he had been for Christ's faith cruelly killed yesterday, even for the desire of Heaven, though there were no hell. But to fear, while the pain is coming, there is all our let. But then if we would remember hell pain on the other side, into which we fall while we flee from this, then should this short pain be no let at all. And yet should we be more pricked forward, if we were faithful, by deep considering of the joys of Heaven, of which the Apostle saith, *Non sunt condignæ passiones hujus temporis ad futuram glorian, quæ revelabitur in nobis*—The passions of

this time be not worthy of the glory that is to come, which shall be shewed in us.* That one text of S. Paul, well-considered, would be sufficient for the whole matter, and therefore I pray you let the consideration of that joy put all worldly trouble out of your heart, and also pray that it may do the same for me.

You thank me for what I have done, and propose to commit it to writing. I would it had happed you to fetch the counsel at some wiser man that could have given you better. But better men may set more things, and better also, thereto. And in the meantime, I beseech Our Lord to breathe of His Holy Spirit into the reader's breast, which inwardly may teach him in heart, without whom, little availeth all that all the mouths of the world were able to teach in men's ears. And thus, good cousin, farewell, till God bring us together again, either here, or in Heaven! Amen!

* Rom. viii.

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